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Brit priest says it's OK to shoplift

UPROAR For a priest in northern England, the commandment that dictates "thou shalt not steal" isn't exactly written in stone.

The Rev. Tim Jones caused an uproar by telling his congregation that it is sometimes acceptable for desperate people to shoplift — as long as they do it at large national chain stores, rather than small, family businesses.

Jones' Robin Hood-like sermon drew rebukes yesterday from fellow clergy, shop owners and police.

Jones said in his sermon Sunday that shoplifting can be justified if a person in real need is not greedy and does not take more than they really need to get by. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News on the Move

What's this barcode for?
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Entertainment pg 52

Trends of the decade

On the web
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Music

Teen sensation

MUCHMUSIC PHOTO

Justin Bieber talks with MuchOnDemand yesterday, gearing fans up for his Live@Much special last night. Born in Stratford, Bieber is the latest teen singing sensation.

Remorse reward

Man given favourable parole recommendation in Creba case

Jeremiah Valentine's willingness to admit his role in one of Toronto's most notorious murders — the Boxing Day killing of Jane Creba — earned him a favourable parole recommendation on his automatic life prison sentence.

The 27-year-old's surprise decision to plead guilty to second-degree murder, a month before jury selection, was cited by the sentencing judge as his main reason for accepting a joint submission that Valentine be allowed to apply for parole in 12 years.

Jane Creba

That is on the lower end of the 10- to 25-year eligibility range allowed under the Criminal Code.

His admission — despite evidentiary "challenges" faced by the Crown — showed an "exceptional exhibition of remorse," Justice John McMahon said yesterday, looking directly at Valentine.

Valentine's lawyer, Edward Sapiano, told court his client "wishes he could turn back the hands of time."

His plea "speaks volumes about his remorse and while he can never make amends, he's given all he has left — a guilty plea," Sapiano said.

Asked by the judge if he had anything to say, Valentine, wearing a yellow striped button-down shirt and baggy jeans, replied: "No, your Honour."

The Creba family was not present.

Crown attorney Maurice Gillezeau read an agreed statement of facts relating to the afternoon of Dec. 26, 2005 — when Creba was killed on Yonge Street north of Dundas during a gunfight between two rival groups.

The 15-year-old Riverdale Collegiate student was caught in the crossfire.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

U.S. teen pleads no contest in Facebook sex scam

A Wisconsin teenager who blackmailed dozens of fellow high school students into sex acts by using photos and videos obtained in a Facebook scam faces up to 50 years in prison after pleading no contest to two felonies yesterday.

Anthony R. Stancl, 19, of New Berlin, had faced 12 charges that carried a maximum penalty of nearly 300 years. He pleaded no contest to repeated sexual assault of the same child and third-degree sexual assault. In exchange, prosecutors dismissed charges that included second-degree sexual assault, child enticement and possession of child pornography.

Stancl was accused of posing as a girl online and persuading more than 30 classmates to send him naked pictures of themselves, then using the images to blackmail them for sex. Authorities found more than 30 folders on Stancl's computer containing about 300 nude images of other male students. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Local

Ikea recalls children's chairs

Ikea Canada is voluntarily recalling the Leopard children's high chair due to a potential safety issue. Snap locks that secure the seat to the frame can break, posing fall and choking hazards to children. There are no reported incidents in Canada. Ikea says customers should stop using the chair immediately and take it to any Ikea store for a full refund. Ninety-two of the chairs, that have either red, black, white or transparent grey seats, have been sold in Canada since October. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Tomorrow's Metro

Comment

Steve Collins writes about the modern Canadian relationship in Relating.

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Blogs Backbeat suggests giving the gift of vinyl this year.

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Local firm bests Microsoft in court

A U.S. federal appeals court has upheld a $290-million US judgment against Microsoft Corp. in a patent case launched by Toronto-based i4i Inc.

The ruling also includes an injunction, set to go into effect Jan. 11, that would prevent the sale of at least some versions of Microsoft's popular Word word processing software.

Yesterday's decision was on an appeal Microsoft launched against a verdict returned by a Texas jury in favour of i4i.

Michel Vulpe

The jury found recent versions of Microsoft Word infringed on a software patent.

Michel Vulpe, founder and co-inventor of i4i, said in a statement the company is pleased with the decision, calling it "an important step in protecting the property rights of small inventors."

i4i chairman Loudon Owen called the decision a "vindication for i4i and a war cry for talented inventors whose patents are infringed."

"The same guts and integrity that are needed to invent and go against the herd, are at the heart of success in patent litigation against a behemoth like Microsoft," Owen said in a statement.

i4i sued Microsoft over the way Word 2003 and Word 2007 customize XML, or extensible markup language, used in encoding and displaying information.

The injunction prevents Microsoft from selling Word products that have the capability of opening an XML file containing custom XML.

Kevin Kutz, Microsoft's director of public affairs, said the world's biggest software company is "moving quickly to comply with the injunction."

Kutz said the injunction "applies only to copies of Microsoft Word 2007 and Microsoft Office 2007 sold in the U.S. on or after the injunction date of Jan. 11, 2010."

"Copies of these products sold before this date are not affected," he added.

Kutz also said Microsoft was considering its legal options. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Murder convictions upheld in child death case

Second-degree murder convictions against the father and stepmother of seven-year-old Randal Dooley were upheld yesterday by Ontario's highest court.

A jury convicted Tony and Marcia Dooley in 2002 of murdering the boy in what's been called one of Canada's worst child-abuse cases.

Yesterday, the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed the couple's argument they should be granted a new trial because the judge made legal errors, which resulted in jury verdicts based on emotion, not evidence.

"Randal's severely compromised physical condition must have been apparent to the appellants," the Appeal Court decision reads.

"Neither did anything to protect Randal from further abuse or to obtain the medical assistance needed to keep him alive."

Randal was born in Jamaica and came to Canada to live with his father and stepmother in November 1997, 11 months before his death.

Abuse

- Seven-year-old Randal Dooley had wasted to just 41 pounds and had 13 fractured ribs, a lacerated liver, four brain injuries, and head-to-toe bruises when he died in 1998.

The key objection raised during the appeal was the trial judge's failure to specifically instruct the jury not to convict the couple based solely on the evidence of prior abuse.

"The trial judge's explanation connecting liability for murder to culpability in the fatal assault, repeated at several different phases of the instructions, made it clear to the jury that in arriving at its verdict it must come to grips with the evidence pertaining to the final assault," the decision reads. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Make-A-Wish **A day fit for a princess**

JOHN R. KENNEDY/FOR METRO TORONTO

Cinderella was at the Rogers Centre yesterday to visit with six young girls chosen by Make-A-Wish Canada to be transformed into princesses prior to watching an afternoon performance of Disney On Ice Presents Princess Classics. The skating spectacular runs until Dec. 28.

News in brief

FRAUD A Toronto man is facing a handful of charges after allegedly attempting to order a $2,000 snowblower from Home Depot with a fraudulent credit card. Felix Nkem Okafor, 42, was arrested and is facing multiple charges, including fraud under $5,000. He appeared in court Dec. 19 and is being held in custody. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Siena salami may be contaminated with listeria, officials warn

The public is being warning to avoid eating a brand of salami because it may be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes. The warning from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Siena Foods of Toronto covers Siena brand mild Cacciatore Salami. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Residents petition TTC over fares

We can't afford a fare hike, low-income Torontonians told TTC chair Adam Giambrone yesterday afternoon.

I can't afford not to have one, he responded.

Members of an east Scarborough chapter of Action for Neighbourhood Change presented the politician with a 1,021-signature petition protesting the increase that goes into effect Jan. 3. The group does advocacy work in neighbourhoods the city identifies as "high priority" because of their high levels of unemployment and crime, low average income and shortage of affordable housing.

Adult cash fares will rise to $3 from $2.75, while a monthly Metropass will go up by $12, to $121.

That's $12 that Neville Jacobs, 63, can't afford.

"I'm here to put a face to the problem," Jacobs, a retired minister and South African expat, said at the meeting with Giambrone.

Jacobs lives in Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park, a neighbourhood nestled against tony Guildwood. Here, 42 per cent of households are headed by a single parent, according to the 2006 census. Seniors, another group that lives disproportionately in poverty, make up 12.6 per cent of the 28,000 residents.

MICHAEL STUPARK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Action for Neighbourhood Change group meets with TTC chair Adam Giambrone to discuss the TTC fare hike's impact on low-income Torontonians. Giambrone was given a petition with over 1,000 signatures opposing the hike.

Jacobs' financial situation shows just how much a seemingly tiny fare hike matters: His monthly pension income is $1,235, of which $862 goes to rent and $300 to cover debts incurred when, he says, "I was too proud to go on social assistance."

The twice-weekly TTC journey Jacobs makes to his medical appointments is onerous, involving a 90-minute trip on three buses. Soon, it will eat up $6 of his precious cash.

"You're absolutely right," Giambrone said when presented with the residents' concerns.

In return, he offered up his own tale of financial woe: Faced with a $95 million shortfall next year, the transit commission can only turn to riders to make up the difference.

Advertising contracts aren't up for negotiation until 2011, and labour agreements are handled by the city.

Council already increased its transit subsidy 15 per cent over 2009. The province hasn't revealed yet how much money the TTC will get next year, he said, and the federal government has virtually ignored pleas by Canadian cities for relief from transit operating costs.

Giambrone (Ward 18, Davenport) said the TTC has been "crunching the numbers" on a proposal to subsidize low-income riders, which would then be presented to the municipal and provincial governments.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Driver charged with abuse of disabled women

TRANSIT York Region police have charged a man who worked as a volunteer driver for Transit Georgina, north of Toronto, with sexual assault.

Police allege the offences involve three women with developmental, physical and psychological challenges who used the service.

Between this past July and October, police say the women reported they were touched inappropriately by the accused.

The driver had been suspended from his driving duties by Transit Georgina.

Harvey Mainprize, 72, of Georgina, was arrested yesterday.

He is charged with three counts of sexual assault and two counts of sexual exploitation of a person with a disability.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Woman dies after being hit by car

COLLISION A 66-year-old Brampton woman has succumbed to her injuries in hospital after being struck by a vehicle Monday night.

Emergency services were called to the residential area collision at Williams Parkway West and Oxtail Lane in Brampton, at about 10 p.m.

The woman, identified as Phuong Troung, was found seriously injured and rushed to hospital, where she later died.

Police said the woman was struck by a 2007 blue Chevrolet travelling westbound on Williams Parkway, while she was crossing from the north to the south side of the street.

The driver of the vehicle remained at the scene, Peel region police said.

Police have not yet determined the cause of the collision or whether charges will be laid. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Major Collision Bureau at 905-453-2121, ext. 3710.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

City can't afford to clean up a white Christmas

WEATHER Here's one reason to hope for a green Christmas: We can't afford snow.

With the year almost over, the city of Toronto has only about $10 million left in its $83 million snow removal budget for the calendar year, about enough to handle two large snowfalls.

The good news is, it doesn't look all that snowy over the next while.

"The forecast through the middle of next week doesn't look too bad," said Peter Noehammer, transportation services director for the city.

3.2 So far, only 3.2 centimetres of snow have fallen this winter in Toronto, compared to 65 centimetres last November and December.

Overnight into Christmas morning, flurries are expected, changing over to ice pellets, possibly some freezing rain and then rain as southerly winds warm things up.

"Our salters will be out, both our own staff and contracted staff, so we'll be able to respond to that," Noehammer said. "It doesn't look like accumulation, just icy conditions."

In the November-December period last year, and the year before, downtown Toronto was pounded with about 65 centimetres of snow. This season? A scant 3.2 centimetres fell on Dec. 9.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Ottawa wants your input on cancer-fighting fries

HEALTH Ottawa wants to know what you think about its unusual proposal to put a cancer-fighting drug into junk food.

Health Canada is inviting public comments until Feb. 21 on its idea to have small amounts of the enzyme asparaginase put into foods like potato chips and french fries.

On its website, Health Canada says its scientists have finished a detailed safety assessment on the enzyme and haven't found any health or safety concerns.

At issue is the chemical acrylamide, which is found as a cooking byproduct in the production of foods like french fries and potato chips and has been linked to cancer in animals.

Research suggests asparaginase reduces acrylamide production.

PHOTOS.COM

Your fries and chips could soon contain a cancer-fighting enzyme.

Health Canada notes the enzyme is used in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Denmark, and has been given a favourable evaluation by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Harbourfront rinks open Christmas Day

Harbourfront Centre invites everyone to celebrate the holidays at the Natrel Kinder Rink and the larger Natrel Rink. Both outdoor rinks are open Christmas Day, with the unveiling of the full-sized Natrel Kinder Rink Christmas morning. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Cable cars better than LRT: Planner

TRANSIT Could the solution to Toronto's transit woes be hanging by a thread?

It may sound crazy, but at least one urban planner believes cable cars rather than streetcars could be the answer to some TTC hassles. And at least one politician believes planner-designer Steven Dale's idea merits further exploration.

The native Torontonian thinks cable might be the better way on some Toronto transit routes. Cable technology, which can be used above street level like a ski lift, or embedded under vehicles like San Francisco's iconic cable cars, is greener, cheaper and faster than Toronto's streetcars, he argues.

"We've spent so long imagining our transit as what we have right now and there's a whole bunch of other ideas out there," he said.

"Light rail, for me, is not the best technology. Light rail happens to be stuck between a technology we don't like — buses — and a technology we can't afford — subways."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Loss of health info sparks probe

83,000 Durham-area patients compromised

Ontario's information and privacy commissioner has launched an investigation after the health information of more than 83,000 people who attended H1N1 flu clinics in Durham Region was apparently lost.

A health department nurse was taking a USB key containing the records to her car in Whitby to take it to a remote clinic site Dec. 15 when the device was lost. A search failed to turn it up.

"We believe it was lost on regional property. We have some video surveillance tape data to indicate that was the case," said Dr. Robert Kyle, chief medical officer of health for Durham Region.

The privacy commission office was advised Monday by the Durham Region health department that the device was missing, said spokesman Bob Spence.

The USB key contained the names, addresses, phone numbers, dates of birth and health card numbers of patients who attended H1N1 flu vaccination clinics in the region between Oct. 23 and Dec. 15.

The device was not encrypted, even though Ontario Privacy Commissioner Ann Cavoukian had issued guidance to all health information custodians in March 2007 that where personal health data is stored on mobile devices in identifiable form, it must be encrypted.

That guidance was issued in a health order to Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children after a laptop computer containing the personal health information of 2,900 patients was stolen from a doctor's minivan in downtown Toronto Jan. 4, 2007.

"There is no excuse for unauthorized access to personal health information (PHI) due to the theft or loss of a mobile computing device — any PHI contained therein must be encrypted," Cavoukian said at the time.

When asked if the lack of encryption was a lapse, Kyle said that would be part of Durham Region's investigation.

The focus of the privacy commissioner's investigation will be on what happened, how it happened and what steps can be taken to prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future, said Spence.

The probe will work in co-operation with, but be separate from Durham Region's own probe, he added.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Concerns

- Anyone with concerns or questions can contact Durham Health at 905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729.

Sick Kids **Metro gives back**

ALDY PINTO/METRO TORONTO

Caron Irwin, left, entertainment and donations co-ordinator from Sick Kids, accepts Metro Toronto's toy donations yesterday from Sabrina Cellupica, office manager and executive assistant.

Officer faces sex assault charges

POLICE A Toronto police officer is facing sexual assault and assault charges after a three-month probe by the Special Investigations Unit.

The allegations against Const. Salameh Marji stem from a traffic stop and subsequent search of a 21-year-old driver Sept. 2.

The SIU, which investigates all cases of serious injury, death or sexual assault involving police officers, received a complaint of "a sexual nature" about a week later and launched an investigation.

The arrest has escalated an ongoing battle between the Toronto police union and the province's SIU.

Police association president Mike McCormack said the charges are politically motivated and he will soon be sending out a memo to members in support of the officer.

"There is no sexual purpose in a search conducted by an officer for weapons and contrabands," said McCormack. "It's our concern that when the SIU lays a charge like this, once again, it jeopardizes the confidence our officers have to do their jobs. We believe the SIU is laying frivolous charges again."

"We believe the SIU is laying frivolous charges again."
Mike McCormack, police association

Marji is the sixth Toronto officer charged by the SIU this year; a considerable jump from 2008, when only one officer was charged.

McCormack believes SIU director Ian Scott is trying to appease Ontario Ombudsman André Marin, who in the fall of 2008 said the SIU was a "toothless tiger" that was biased toward police.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Humane society allowed back

ANIMALS A judge has ordered the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to allow Toronto Humane Society staff back inside the building by Dec. 29.

The shelter has been closed since Nov. 26 when it was raided and charges laid against five senior staff.

The charges include cruelty to animals.

The OSPCA will be allowed to continue its investigation and to care for the animals.

But it cannot occupy the building indefinitely.

The humane society had argued a search warrant obtained by the OSPCA was only good for five days.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Real estate agent sentenced to five years in jail for grow-op
A Markham real estate agent who converted 54 rented homes into Canada's largest-known illegal marijuana grow-op was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison and fined more than $1 million. If Phu Nhi (John) Trac, 46, fails to pay the fines within two years, he must serve another five years, a judge ruled. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Premier laments Copenhagen

McGuinty blasts Conservatives over 'missed opportunity'

Canadians are "punching below our weight" on climate change and Prime Minister Stephen Harper squandered an opportunity to lead at Copenhagen, charges Premier Dalton McGuinty.

In his most candid remarks since world leaders last Friday concluded a summit on greenhouse gas emissions with a noncommittal three-page pact that sets no long-term reduction targets, the premier lambasted Ottawa.

"It was a missed opportunity for us as people, as a species, frankly," he said in an interview with Global News' Focus Ontario to be broadcast Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

"We failed to find a way to come together and, in a sincere and determined fashion, come to grips with a global threat — climate change.

"Something has been put in place (but) it is not legally binding. Hopefully, discussions over the next year or two will lead to something that is binding."

TONY ROZ/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, seen here in this file photo, has criticized Prime Minister Stephen Harper for squandering an opportunity to lead on climate change at Copenhagen.

In a separate interview with CTV News, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told Robert Fife and Lloyd Robertson that Canada cannot act unilaterally on climate change.

"If the Americans don't take realistic actions on emissions, it's difficult for Canada to do much because, quite frankly, factories and economic activity will simply relocate south of the border if the Americans are not harmonized with us," said Harper.

McGuinty said he and Quebec Premier Jean Charest are preparing "our people for a post-carbon world, or at least a carbon-constrained world."

"That's why, here in Ontario, we're shutting down coal-fired generation (by 2014). We have found all kinds of new opportunities in this world through our Green Energy Act. It's going to create 50,000 jobs for us."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Ford to buy out 20% of workers in Canada

AUTO Automaker Ford has confirmed that a round of buyouts aimed at reducing its global workforce will be offered to about 20 per cent of its 6,200 workers in Canada.

The U.S.-based automaker says it is working to resize its manufacturing capacity to better align it to market conditions.

Ford announced Monday it would offer buyout or retirement incentive packages to all of its 41,000 hourly workers in the United States.

Ford is the healthiest of Detroit's three automakers. Even so, it says it still has more workers than it needs.

Specific financial details of the offer to the Canadian Auto Workers union members were not disclosed in a Ford of Canada email.

However, the company said the offer applies solely to hourly workers at its plant in Windsor, which employs 1,600 and has 1,000 on layoff.

"These incentives stem from the recently concluded negotiations with the CAW," the email said.

In the U.S., Ford's buyout package is available to workers with at least a year of service and it includes $50,000 cash and the choice of a $25,000 voucher to buy a vehicle or $20,000 more in cash.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

OUTLOOK The beleaguered auto industry is poised for a slow but steady turnaround in 2010 that will usher in an era of profitability and job growth after years of declines, says a new industry forecast. The Conference Board of Canada said the auto sector isn't necessarily out of trouble, but there are encouraging signs that profits will return in 2010 and strengthen each year through to at least 2014. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Toronto's Mega Uranium reports profit

Toronto-based Mega Uranium Ltd. said yesterday it earned a profit in its latest financial year, boosted by a one-time gain due to tax reorganization in Australia. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Last-minute gift solutions

We all have our special Christmas Eve traditions. And maybe yours is sweating profusely while sprinting around for last-minute gifts.

Fret not, dear slacker — here are some holiday gift ideas you may not have thought of. And if you don't like 'em? Well, maybe next year you should get your act together.

1 For people with a sense of humour, how about Michael Bublé in a Santa hat? Have a singing telegram sent to their house, delivered by their favourite celebrity impersonator. Arnie the Ham: The Singing Telegram Man (416-635-6925) will take orders until 2 a.m. Christmas Eve for about $150 a pop.

2 Everyone knows the secret to getting people into cultural institutions is to make admission free. A year-long membership at the AGO — which will be open until 4 p.m. Christmas Eve — is a great deal at $120 for two parents and their entire brood.

3 Maybe your dog wants to celebrate baby Jesus, too. For $29, you can buy a Doggie Detail Card from Doggie Central (416-412-7771), which includes a play session, a bath and a paws therapy treatment (open until 3 p.m. Christmas Eve).

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

What's open, what's closed

Christmas Day

- The TTC operates on a Sunday schedule, with the subway and most routes starting at 9 a.m. GO Transit trains and buses run on a holiday schedule.
- Banks and government offices will be closed.
- The Beer Store and LCBO locations are closed.
- Most shopping malls are closed.

Boxing Day

- The TTC operates on a Saturday schedule, with the subway and most routes starting at 6 a.m. GO Transit trains and buses run on a Saturday schedule.
- Banks and government offices are closed.
- The Beer Store and LCBO locations are closed.
- Most shopping malls are open. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

VINCE TALOTTA/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

CAW president Ken Lewenza holds a sign at a Nortel retirees' rally at Queen's Park for full pension benefits in this file photo.

Restructuring, bankruptcies expected to affect pensioners

CORPORATIONS The dismantling of Nortel Networks in the midst of a recession signalled the start to a disastrous year of corporate restructurings that could see thousands of Canadian workers lose their jobs and pensions at the former tech giant and other insolvent companies next year.

Numerous iconic Canadian companies buckled under their debt in 2009, as the downturn shook the foundations of household corporate names from Canwest to Air Canada.

While the outcome varied for each business, it became apparent that aside from debts owed to lenders, former employees were also taking a hit on their pensions — the money that was supposedly reserved for retirement.

In all the cases, workers at the companies are nervous about lost jobs and the safety of their pensions as 2010 looms and uncertainty abounds about the future of their industries.

"There's going to be a showdown in 2010 around the laws governing private pension plans," predicted David Coles, national president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union.

"There's going to be a showdown in 2010 around the laws governing private pension plans."
David Coles, union president

Coles said the courts and lawyers consider workers a low priority behind creditors, including the banks and other businesses.

"Some of the corporate right and politicians are saying companies can't afford to continue these rich pension plans — problem is, it's not their frickin' money to start with," Coles said.

"This is money that was either deferred wages or direct contributions (from employees) ... They gave this money to the employer in trust. Just in the wink of an eye that promise doesn't count, but the promise to the banks does count?" THE CANADIAN PRESS

Clues sought in homicide case

CRIME Durham police officers canvassed the Kennedy Road and Sheppard Avenue area yesterday in search of clues to help them with a double homicide investigation.

Harjinder Singh Sandhu, 28, of Brampton and Puneet Singh Chhina, 26, of Nepean were found shot and stabbed in the trunk of a rental car in Pickering this past May.

New information uncovered by police suggests the victims had travelled from Brampton to the area of Kennedy and Sheppard to meet with someone. It is now believed they were killed in that area.

Afterwards, a cellphone belonging to one of the victims travelled north to Stoufville in a second vehicle.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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McLean House may get heritage designation

The Ontario government has stepped in to prevent any further damage to the home of the founder of Maclean's magazine. Minister of Culture Aileen Carroll issued a stop order Monday to keep the Toronto home of John MacLean safe while the province looks at its potential heritage significance. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Air pollutants from cars linked to pneumonia in seniors

Prolonged exposure to high levels of chemicals from motor vehicle exhaust fumes and industrial air pollutants can lead to hospitalization for pneumonia among seniors, a study has found.

The study, led by researchers at McMaster University in Hamilton, set out to assess the effects of long-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide from motor vehicle emissions and fine particulate matter from industrial air pollution.

"We compared people over the age of 65 who were admitted to hospital for community-acquired pneumonia to randomly selected people from the same community who did not have pneumonia," said principal investigator Dr. Mark Loeb, an infectious disease specialist at McMaster.

"And what we found was that individuals who developed community-acquired pneumonia were more likely to have long-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide (from vehicle exhaust) and they were twice more likely to be hospitalized."

The study, to be published in the Jan. 1 issue of the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, looked at 365 older adults living in Hamilton who had been hospitalized with pneumonia between July 2003 and April 2005. They were compared to 494 control subjects randomly selected from the same neighbourhoods who did not have pneumonia.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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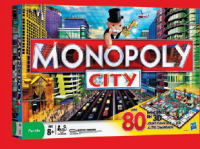

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SHOPPERS DRUG MART

Man charged with liquor smuggling after small plane lands in dry town

A man has been charged with smuggling liquor into a dry Manitoba community. Mounties were on patrol in Pauingassi when they saw a small single-engine aircraft land there. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada

Wages get 2010 boost

The minimum wage in Newfoundland and Labrador will increase by 50 cents to $9.50 an hour on Jan. 1. The government has committed to raising it to $10 an hour by July. Labour Minister Susan Sullivan says the increases will foster a competitive work environment. THE CANADIAN PRESS

'Libel chill' roasted

Historic Supreme Court ruling backs 'responsible journalism'

It's being hailed as a landmark victory for free speech.

The Supreme Court of Canada offered journalists and bloggers a new defence against libel yesterday in a pair of historic rulings.

The rulings effectively exonerated two newspapers — the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen — and created the new "responsible journalism" defence.

That means reporters get more leeway to pursue controversial stories as long as they are deemed to be in the public interest.

> **"It's probably the most important decision the Supreme Court's ever decided on the law of libel."**
> Paul Schabas

The rulings mean journalists can make factual errors, but as long as they take a series of steps to ensure fairness in stories that are deemed to be in the public interest, they cannot be successfully sued for libel.

Media lawyers hailed it as a major step toward reducing so-called "libel chill," which prompts journalists to back away from contentious stories for fear of being sued, often by powerful interests with deep pockets.

The rulings also saved the two papers from paying out more than $1.5 million in damages.

Included was $1 million for punitive damages against the Star — one of the largest such awards in Canadian libel history.

Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin, writing for the unanimous 9-0 court, said the existing libel defences were too restrictive and contrary to the free expression guarantees in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"To insist on court-established certainty in reporting on matters of public interest may have the effect … of preventing communication of facts which a reasonable person would accept as reliable and which are relevant and important to public debate," McLachlin said.

But it would also inhibit "political discourse and debate on matters of public importance," she added.

And it would impede, she said, "the cut and thrust of discussion necessary to discovery of the truth."

The rulings were hailed by media lawyers and journalism organizations as a major step toward modernizing Canada's archaic defamation law.

"It's probably the most important decision the Supreme Court's ever decided on the law of libel," said Star lawyer Paul Schabas. THE CANADIAN PRESS

PAWEL DWULIT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The statue of Justice outside the Supreme Court overlooks the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in Ottawa yesterday.

Stories sparked landmark case

The Toronto Star story in question was about plans for a golf course. The Citizen's articles scrutinized the activities of a former police officer. The Star's article focused on opposition by cottagers to businessman Peter Grant's plans to expand the golf course. Grant was a friend of ex-premier Mike Harris. The Citizen reported the saga of a former Ontario Provincial Police officer, who travelled to New York City with his dog after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to hunt for survivors at Ground Zero.

PM stirs fears over carbon tax

SPIN Prime Minister Stephen Harper has refused to rule out a carbon tax, sending spin doctors scrambling.

Harper was asked in a year-end interview with CTV News whether Canadians will ever see a carbon tax applied to their consumption of greenhouse-emitting fossil fuels.

"I hope not," he replied.

"We're going to have to see what the regime in the United States looks like.

"We're going to have to harmonize a lot of our efforts with their efforts to be truly effective on a continental basis.

"But obviously we're looking to avoid any additional taxes on Canadians. That's a pretty firm priority of this government."

Later, the Conservatives put out an internal memo telling MPs and other Tories that a story on Harper's interview was "false and misleading."

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Stephen Harper's 'I hope not' raises questions.

The memo left out the "I hope not" answer and his reference to watching what the U.S. does.

The Tories are sensitive about the matter because Harper hammered former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion during the last election campaign for proposing a carbon tax. THE CANADIAN PRESS

No English in church, priests say

LANGUAGE A group of Montreal priests says the house of God is going bilingual — and they're not happy about it.

Four Roman Catholic priests are complaining that English has been creeping back into their churches over the past five years and they want it to stop. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Drug factory planned: Police

ARRESTS Nine people face charges in B.C. after police say they planned to make synthetic drugs such as crystal meth and ecstasy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Man charged in two-year-old murder case

RCMP have charged Darcy Kozak with first-degree murder in the death of Kenneth Robinson two years ago on Vancouver Island. THE CANADIAN PRESS

THE CANADIAN PRESS/COLIN PERKEL

Master Warrant Officer Charlotte Hawes serves Christmas dinner yesterday at the Canadian military-civilian outreach base in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Christmas arrives early in Afghanistan

Soldiers in Kandahar enjoy festive dinner, beer

Outside the mess hall where Canadian troops were tucking into an early Christmas dinner yesterday, the only hint of seasonal snow came from the giant inflatable Frosty the Snowman doll standing sentry alongside Santa Claus.

The excitement in the air at Camp Nathan Smith, the Canadian military-civilian outreach base on the edge of Kandahar city, was evident as soldiers first lined up for a precious beer ration, followed by a plate of turkey, cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes.

> **"It's rough — I'm newly wed ... But I'm here for a good cause, so it'll pass until next year."**
> Cpl. Joseph Henry

Soldiers, many sporting Santa hats or reindeer horns, played with party favours while seasonal music blared from a boom box for a Christmas dinner that was, for logistical reasons, scheduled a few days ahead of the holiday.

Other soldiers, normally assigned to other duties, worked the kitchen, while — in keeping with military tradition — officers served the rank and file.

"Christmas dinner was great," said Cpl. Joseph Henry as he prepared to head out into the field.

Despite the tug of family and relatives back home, several soldiers said they didn't mind spending Christmas in Kandahar.

For others such as Henry, being away from home over the festive season doesn't come easy. "It's rough — I'm newly wed … I'd like to be with her," Henry said. "But I'm here for a good cause, so it'll pass until next year."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Committee meets on detainee issue

Opposition parties aren't letting Christmas wassailing or Conservative stonewalling get in the way of their pursuit of the Afghan detainee controversy.

Liberal, NDP and Bloc Québécois MPs barrelled ahead yesterday with a meeting of a special Commons committee on Afghanistan, despite a boycott by Conservative MPs.

Lack of quorum forced them to meet informally but they still managed to keep the issue alive, hearing testimony from two key critics of the Harper government's handling of the detainee file.

Early holiday

- In a letter to the committee clerk, Tory MP Laurie Hawn, parliamentary secretary to Defence Minister Peter MacKay, said Conservatives would not participate in yesterday's hearings because Christmas "is a time to spend with family, friends and loved ones."

They heard from Paul Champ, lawyer for Amnesty International and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, which jointly went to court in an unsuccessful bid to secure an injunction halting the Canadian transfer of detainees to Afghan prisons.

They also heard from a retired diplomat who recently organized a letter from more than 100 former ambassadors blasting the Harper government's treatment of diplomat whistleblower Richard Colvin, who says he warned the government in 2006 about the likely torture of prisoners handed over by Canadian soldiers to Afghan authorities.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

N.S. study makes 'provocative sex science' list

A Canadian study has been named one of the most provocative sex science stories of 2009 by the science website LiveScience.com.

The study, led by psychology professor Maryann Fisher at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, looked into how men and women would feel if they cheated on their partner.

The research concluded that men feel guiltier following sexual infidelity, while women feel guiltier after an emotional transgression.

Fisher and her team had hypothesized the opposite.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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New N.L. ferry out of service for repairs

Marine Atlantic is taking its newest ferry out of service to repair a hole in the stern. The Atlantic Vision was about to tie up in Port aux Basques, N.L., yesterday when strong winds pushed it into the dock. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Top court ends jumpers' fight

Appeal denied for Games' try

VANCOUVER 2010 Games

Ten years after the triumphant whoosh of her first ski jump at Calgary's Olympic Park, Katie Willis readied herself to walk away from the sport after Canada's highest court brought an end to the legal battle by female jumpers hoping to compete in the Vancouver Games.

The Supreme Court of Canada announced yesterday that it will not hear an appeal from the female athletes.

"We've tried and we've put so much into this. This is the sport that I love and this is like someone telling me that I can't do it anymore and that's pretty heartbreaking," Willis, 18, said in an interview.

The women contend that the Charter of Rights governs the Olympic Games and that Vancouver organizers are breaking the law by hosting only men's ski jumping.

"We've tried and we've put so much into this."
Katie Willis, jumper

They were seeking leave to appeal two lower-court rulings that said the charter cannot dictate which sports are included in the Winter Games. The lower courts ruled that the charter does not apply to the International Olympic Committee, which decides which sports are included in the Games.

The IOC committee voted in 2006 not to include women's ski jumping at the 2010 Games because the sport was not developed enough.

Vancouver's Olympic organizing committee said in a statement it hopes the female ski jumpers have a place in future Games.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Torch relay **On the Thames**

DAVE CHIDLEY/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mary Antone, of The Oneida On The Thames, runs with the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Torch in front of Ed Antone in Muncey, Ont. The Olympic torch relay continued through southern Ontario ending the day in Chatham. **Follow the Olympic torch's journey with an interactive map at metronews.ca/sports**

N.S. premier defends 4-day trip to Olympics

VANCOUVER 2010 Games

Nova Scotia's NDP premier is going to the Vancouver Olympics and will accept a pass to all locations from organizers, even though his party sharply criticized his Conservative predecessor for his plan to receive VIP passes at the Games.

Premier Darrell Dexter said yesterday he's decided to go to the Games for four days to attend a Nova Scotia Day ceremony, and to participate in receptions that will showcase his province.

He said he will have an "access pass" for himself and two officials from his office, but he couldn't explain what the pass entitled him to. No other politicians will go, Dexter said, and he won't sit and watch sports events.

"There are not free tickets available ... what there are, are some venue passes that are available but they aren't tickets," he said.

Dexter said he knows he will attend receptions, but he doesn't know the specifics of his schedule.

"I'm not intending to do anything other than to go to support the event. ... I think it's really important that people understand we're going to support money that we have already spent." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pickup truck plows into casino

Patrons dived for cover yesterday when a police chase ended with a pickup truck plowing through the front doors of the Fallsview Casino in Niagara Falls, Ont.

Niagara Region police say the pursuit began around 2 a.m. after the suspect was involved in a domestic dispute where he allegedly assaulted a man and a woman with a weapon. A 45-year-old woman and her 21-year-old son are in hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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On Monday, two teens stole a car and led police on a chase while still wearing electronic bracelets from previous convictions.

Winnipeg is auto theft's wild frontier

It may be a sign of how brazen criminals have become in the city known as Canada's auto-theft capital.

Police say two teenagers, who were already on the list of Manitoba's chronic car thieves, stole a Ford Fusion from a Winnipeg garage Monday night while still wearing electronic ankle bracelets from previous convictions.

Police say the two males, 17 and 19, broke into three homes and found car keys inside the third. They took the car and drove through city streets at speeds topping 100 kilometres an hour. Police gave chase briefly, but stopped because of the high speeds. The suspects eventually crashed and were arrested, Const. Jacqueline Chaput said yesterday.

Officers were able to find the pair because they were wearing ankle bracelets the Manitoba government has made mandatory for the most chronic car thieves, she said.

The chase occurred the same day another youth pleaded guilty to stealing an SUV in March 2008, when he was 14, and crashing it into a taxi, killing the driver. The boy is to be sentenced in the new year and the Crown is seeking an adult term.

Winnipeg has long posted the highest per capita auto-theft rate in the country, according to StatsCan's annual crime reports. In 2007, an early-morning jogger in a quiet neighbourhood was deliberately rammed by the occupants of a stolen SUV.

"There are those who are completely incorrigible," said Mike Sutherland, president of the Winnipeg Police Association, which has called for tougher penalties.

The city's car theft rate has dropped from its peak four years ago, in part due to laws requiring immobilizers in many vehicles.

But Sutherland said thieves are still finding ways to take cars, and are now more likely to steal one with a driver behind the wheel. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Repeat offenders

- Electronic monitoring, increased supervision and court orders simply haven't deterred some of the city's worst repeat offenders, said Const. Jacqueline Chaput.

Murder convict claims recorded conversations violated his rights

APPEAL An Alberta man convicted of gunning down an RCMP officer in the Northwest Territories is appealing his first-degree murder conviction, claiming conversations in which he asked his girlfriend and family members to take care of witnesses shouldn't have been presented as evidence.

In documents filed last week, Emrah Bulatci challenges more than a dozen rulings a judge made during the four-week trial earlier this fall. Bulatci was sentenced to life in prison with no chance at parole for 25 years after a jury found him guilty in the 2007 shooting death of Const. Chris Worden.

Bulatci, 25, claims his Charter rights were violated when jailhouse conversations were intercepted and later presented to the jury. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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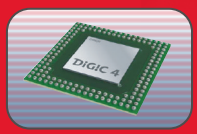

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Positive news for Manitoba

The Manitoba government is suddenly awash in red ink. In its latest fiscal update, the NDP government says it's on track to spend $592 million more than it takes in during the fiscal year ending in March. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dearth of donated kidneys worsening: Study

A new study finds that the gap between supply and demand for donated kidneys in Canada is widening.

A report, released yesterday by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, shows a significant increase in the number of kidney transplants over the past decade.

But there's been a decline in the number of these transplants relative to the number of kidney failure patients, with six transplants per 100 patient years of dialysis in 2008, compared to eight transplants per 100 patient years of dialysis in 1999.

Jean-Marie Berthelot, vice-president of programs at the institute, says the rise in demand is partly due to an increase in diabetes-related kidney failure cases in Canada. The number of new patients with end-stage renal disease associated with diabetes nearly doubled, to nearly 1,900 in 2008 from about 1,000 in 1996.

"The need for transplantable organs has never been greater," said Dr. John Gill of the University of British Columbia.

Living donors accounted for 69 per cent of an increase in donors over the past decade, but they can donate only one kidney or part of a liver or lung.

A deceased donor can provide up to six organs for transplant.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

812 Canadians donated organs in 1999

1,038 Donated organs in 2008

215 Died awaiting transplant in 2008

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Judge imposes rules at Vale Inco picket site

COMPROMISE A judge has imposed picket line rules at the strikebound Vale Inco site in Sudbury. Justice John Poupore called both sides back to court yesterday after they failed to come to an agreement.

One of the major items of contention was the company's busing of employees across the union's 10 picket lines.

Poupore ordered the company to designate a schedule and tell the union when vehicles with eight or more people would cross. He also told the union that buses cannot be detained for more than 12 minutes.

About 3,000 production and maintenance workers in Sudbury and another 130 in Port Colborne have been on strike since July.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Halifax mayor vows to swim in harbour

COOL DIP Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly says he's ready to take another swim in the harbour once a damaged sewage treatment plant is up and running again.

Kelly challenged reporters to join him as he led a tour of the wastewater treatment facility downtown yesterday.

The plant is in the final stage of recovery and is expected to be online by spring. It suffered serious damage from a flood during a power failure last winter. THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

TASER Calgary police answering a domestic dispute call Sunday used a Taser on a man they say was choking a woman. Another woman was found with stab wounds. A 27-year-old man faces charges including attempted murder.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Inmate critical after assault
An inmate of a Manitoba correctional facility is in critical but stable condition in hospital after he was assaulted by several prisoners. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Flaherty aims to stay the course

Ottawa has ruled out significant tax cuts or new spending programs for Canadians in next year's federal budget, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty says.

With the deficit scheduled to hit a record $56 billion for 2009-2010, the finance minister told The Canadian Press in a year-end interview the government must keep spending under control and can't afford further tax cuts.

"I would not anticipate any new substantial spending programs or any new substantial tax reductions in the next budget. This is a stay the course budget," he said from his 21st-floor office in downtown Ottawa.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty does not expect any substantial spending programs or tax reductions in the next budget.

But Flaherty also ruled out tax increases or painful program cuts — for now — to rein in the deficit.

Despite having gone through one of the most difficult years any Canadian finance minister has faced since Paul Martin's battle against the deficit in the mid-1990s, Flaherty appeared sanguine about the economy and the protracted challenge of balancing the books.

Barring a shocking development, Flaherty said he is optimistic the Canadian economy has stabilized and will experience moderate growth next year.

"I'm not pessimistic," he said. "Last year at this time was a very uncertain time ... things were grim and getting grimmer.

"A year later I feel there is stability. We still have to see the evidence of true growth but there is stability now, the unemployment numbers have stabilized, we're in a better place."

Although minimal growth returned to the economy in the third quarter, economists are penciling in a more robust rebound in the four-per-cent range annualized for the last three months of 2009. Forecasts for 2010 range from 2.5 to 3.0 per cent.

As well, while Statistics Canada's employment surveys have been all over the map of late, most have shown the massive job losses of last winter are over.

Yesterday, the agency said its non-farm payroll survey found 34,500 industrial jobs were added in October. In an earlier report, the agency's more timely household survey showed a 73,000-job gain in November.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Deal reached in patent lawsuit

TECHNOLOGY WebTech Wireless Inc. which provides technology and services for tracking vehicles and fleets, will pay an undisclosed amount to settle a patent infringement suit brought against it 2½ years ago by LunarEye Inc.

WebTech said it will record a charge for the settlement in its fourth-quarter 2009 results but didn't disclose how much it will pay.

"The terms of the settlement agreement are confidential, but involve a one-time payment, no admission of infringement and a release from any future action by LunarEye against WebTech Wireless on this matter," WebTech said yesterday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Settlement won't hurt performance: National Bank
National Bank says the $75 million it must pay to settle accusations of misdealings will not impact its 2010 performance. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MIT student's stolen laptop held thesis

KRISTEN THOMPSON
Metro Canada

A 23-year-old aeronautics student's academic future is up in the air after his laptop – which contained his master's degree research – was stolen from a backpack he left in his car at Burnaby Lake, B.C.

"I was just devastated," said Russell Stratton, who's home for the holidays between finishing a master's program at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Boston and applying to a PhD program.

"I have (some of the work) backed up, but there's probably 50 or 60 hours of work in there."

Stratton had gone to his mother's choir show on Sunday night and left his work in his car. When he came out afterward, his car window was smashed, and the backpack was gone.

"It had (my) textbooks, all my handwritten notes from throughout my degree, notes I made from studying for exams — which I need to write to get in the PhD program in January," Stratton said.

Also gone was his laptop, which had the research he needed to get into the PhD program, and $150 in cash — a Christmas gift from his dad.

Stratton's father returned to the park yesterday and found the backpack in a dumpster, along with the textbooks and notes. There was no sign of the computer.

He said it's not about the money, but the work — which is useless to anyone who isn't interested in aircraft design and aeronautics — and he'd be happy just to get the hard drive back.

Information

- Anyone with information can email Stratton at rwstrat@mit.edu or call him at 857-523-9343.

Sally Ann braces for holiday shortfall

TRACEY TONG
Metro Canada

Barring a Christmas miracle, the Salvation Army in Ottawa will fall short of its $500,000 goal for its kettle campaign.

As of yesterday, the Salvation Army had three days to raise $120,000 to meet its goal of half a million dollars before the campaign closes on Christmas Eve.

"It's a big hill," said Salvation Army spokesman Michael Maidment. "But I'm very hopeful that we can reach the goal."

The money raised through the kettles stays locally, and helps more than 20,000 people through 22 community family services programs.

The programs assist families with basic needs like food hampers and warm clothing, winter clothing, and vouchers for furniture, and toiletries.

The Salvation Army also administers programs including Winter Warmth, which is funded by Hydro Ottawa and Enbridge Gas, and Rent Bank, a program that helps people at risk of eviction pay their rent.

"If we don't meet our goal, then we can't help as many people," he said. "That's worrisome because we know that in 2009, we saw a significant increase in people who came to the Salvation Army for assistance," he said.

Another reason for the shortfall is because the way the calendar falls — with Christmas on a Friday, there is one fewer weekend to collect donations, Maidment said.

By the time the last kettle closes tomorrow evening, the group still expects to be $25,000 to $30,000 short. People can continue to give online at Salvationarmy.ca or by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY.

TRACEY TONG/METRO CANADA

Salvation Army volunteer Kathy Morin collects donations in downtown Ottawa yesterday.

Negotiations still ongoing in NB Power deal: Minister

POWER Quebec is suddenly singing a more conciliatory tune over its planned purchase of New Brunswick's power utility.

The provincial government is scrambling to clarify a suggestion that its purchase of NB Power is a done deal — with no possibility of sweetening the offer. Natural Resources Minister Nathalie Normandeau is switching her tone, one day after saying the agreement is final and not open for renegotiation.

She's now saying that only an agreement-in-principle was signed on Oct. 29, and that negotiations are ongoing.

She says a more comprehensive final deal isn't expected before March.

The sale is a hot potato for the New Brunswick government, which has come under intense political fire over its plan to sell NB Power's assets to Hydro-Quebec for just under $5 billion. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Giuliani has no plans to run

Former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani says he's not running for New York state governor or U.S. Senate. Giuliani told WABC-TV yesterday that he's decided to turn his attention to his law firm and consulting business rather than commit to another high-profile run for office. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World

Police needed for unruly crowd at JFK

Police say officers were called in to help with an unruly crowd at the Delta Air Lines terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey spokesman Steve Coleman said Delta asked the authority to send in officers yesterday to help with crowd control. Delta spokeswoman Susan Elliott said a number of people whose flight to Haiti was cancelled in Sunday's storm have been trying to fly on standby, but haven't been having any luck. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gunmen kill family after son's funeral

MEXICO Gunmen mowed down the family of a Mexican soldier just hours after the military honoured him as a national hero for losing his life during a raid that took down powerful drug kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva.

The brazen attack happened shortly before midnight Monday at the home of fallen marine Melquisedet Angulo in the Gulf coast state of Tabasco, police said. Hit men linked to Beltran Leyva's cartel have a strong presence in the state and are believed to be behind the slayings of Angulo's mother, his two siblings and his aunt, federal officials said yesterday. Another unidentified woman was being treated at a hospital for unspecified wounds.

President Felipe Calderon called the attack "a cowardly act" and vowed to press forward with his nationwide drug fight involving more than 45,000 troops.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

FRANCE French aviation investigators said yesterday they are optimistic about finding the black boxes of Air France Flight 447, which crashed in the Atlantic last June en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, when a third phase of the search begins in February.

NEW YORK Experts say a dog in suburban New York City is the U.S.'s first confirmed to be carrying the same strain of swine flu that is infecting humans. The 13-year-old mixed-breed male is recovering. Medical official David Sachs says he had the dog tested for swine flu because its owner previously had the virus. Experts have said it appears the flu can spread to animals from humans, but there's no evidence humans can get it from pets.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Brewing up a lack of choice

Canadian Embassy in Washington takes heat for not offering diverse list of beer

Canada has a reputation for producing a wide variety of excellent beers, but tipplers visiting the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., had just three choices of brews recently — Molson Canadian, Alexander Keith's Ale or Blue Light.

According to documents obtained through Freedom of Information legislation, the gleaming embassy on iconic Pennsylvania Avenue offers up a long list of Canadian wines to visitors, among them pinot noirs, merlots, Gewurztraminers and rieslings from an array of vineyards across the country.

Pity the poor Canadian beer drinker, however — as of Oct. 31 of this year, only those three basic brews were available. As craft breweries and brew pubs take off in Canada, one Canadian beer expert says it's a shame the embassy isn't doing a better job introducing Americans to some quality suds brewed north of the 49th parallel.

Canadian beer connoisseurs Bob and Doug MacKenzie (portrayed by Rick Moranis, left, and Dave Thomas) may object if informed the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., offers more wine than beer.

"We should absolutely be offering up better than those three," Stephen Beaumont said in a recent interview.

"It's completely irresponsible on their part — they are supposed to be there promoting Canadian interests abroad. It's insulting to beer. For them to have a huge wine list and three very similar-tasting Canadian beers out of all we have available in this country is a disgrace."

The embassy says it only buys what's on hand. Just six Canadian beers are available from local duty-free suppliers, said the embassy's Hani Nasser: Molson Canadian, Molson Golden, Labatt Blue, Blue Light, Kokanee, and Keith's.

"All of them are purchased by the embassy," Nasser said. "However, not all the beers are available at all times, and thus the embassy's stock of beer varies from time to time."

If Canadian breweries want to see their beers on the embassy bar list, Nasser added, they can contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to become part of a program that will supply their products to various embassies and consulates around the world.

3 Canadian brands of beer recently available at the Canadian Embassy in Washington: Molson Canadian, Keith's and Labatt's Blue Light.

But Beaumont said Canada's embassy in the U.S., in particular, should take the bull by the horns and promote quality Canadian beers like St. Ambroise Oatmeal Stout, from Montreal's McAuslan Brewing — the only Canadian brew that he bestowed with a world-class, four-star rating on his blog, World of Beer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Weeks of fighting leave 73 Saudis dead

RIYADH Saudi Arabia said yesterday that 73 Saudis have been killed and 26 have gone missing since the kingdom launched an offensive against Yemeni Shiite rebels along the border of Saudi Arabia and Yemen last month.

The announcement was the first indication the U.S. ally had suffered such heavy losses in the remote area, where it is difficult to independently confirm details of the fighting. The rebels, known as Hawthis, have alleged dozens of civilian deaths in Saudi air assaults.

Prince Khaled bin Sultan, the Saudi assistant defence minister, also said during a border tour that Yemeni rebels who seized the border village of al-Jabiri have 48 hours to vacate it or surrender. Saudi forces have tried to retake al-Jabiri, a tiny outpost surrounded by Yemeni territory on three sides.

The prince said in remarks carried by the official Saudi Press Agency that the conflict "was almost finished," but did not elaborate on that claim. He referred to the dead as "martyrs," a term used to describe slain troops.

Yemen's troubles

- Yemen, troubled by a weak central government, is also struggling to confront a threat from al-Qaida militants, pirates roaming the waters off its shores and the increasingly powerful secessionist movement in the south.

Saudi Arabia launched an air and ground offensive against the Yemeni rebels Nov. 5, after skirmishes along the border.

Both Saudi Arabia and Yemen have accused Shiite Iran of backing the rebels, a charge Tehran has denied.

The Yemeni rebels complain the Yemeni government is allied with hardline Sunnis who advocate Saudi-influenced conservative Islam.

Sunni radicals, who consider Shiites to be heretics, gained influence in Yemen after helping the government win the 1994 civil war against the secessionist south.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Train service resumes beneath channel

EUROPE Eurostar scrambled to get tens of thousands of passengers home for the holidays as it resumed service of high-speed trains under the English Channel yesterday, four days after a service shutdown caused by a hallmark of Christmas travel: Snow.

The first train pulled out of Paris' Gare du Nord station in the morning carrying 750 passengers, many of whom had been stranded since the rail link between Britain, France and Belgium was suspended Saturday.

Hundreds of others waited in a line that stretched across the cavernous Paris train station, as Eurostar staff circulated with trays of pastries and coffee in paper cups.

Eurostar has identified the problem that caused trains to break down in the Channel Tunnel, sparking the shutdown — unusually dry, powdery snow that got into the engines.

The shutdown affected 40,000 people and left French President Nicolas Sarkozy indignant.

People who were supposed to travel over the weekend were given priority as trains started up. Service was less frequent than usual: About two out of three regularly scheduled Eurostars were running.

AKIRA SUEMORI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A passenger from a Eurostar train is greeted by a relative yesterday at St. Pancras Station in London.

Sarkozy summoned the head of France's SNCF rail operator into the Elysee Palace Monday for a one-on-one meeting and ordered him to get the Eurostar moving again, saying the situation was "unacceptable for travellers."

Wintry weather has affected European air travellers, too. Flights in and out of Frankfurt International Airport in Germany resumed yesterday after snow and ice left 8,000 passengers stranded inside terminals or in nearby hotels

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Dust storm wreaks havoc on Arizona highway
Officials say a dust storm has led to 20 or more collisions on Interstate 10 in central Arizona, with several vehicles catching fire. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

IRAN Three Americans arrested in July after crossing into Iran from neighbouring Iraq are still under investigation, a prosecutor said yesterday as he underlined Tehran's concern about 11 Iranians it says are being held in the U.S. Iranian officials have repeatedly mentioned the cases together, and U.S. officials have been concerned that Iran could try to use the detained Americans — said by their families to be innocent hikers who went astray — as bargaining chips. "The Americans should know that there are 11 Iranian nationals in U.S. prisons. We hope the Americans are treating them based on regulations," prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dowlatabadi said, according to the official IRNA news agency.

EUROPE Belgium has launched a case against Switzerland at the International Court of Justice for allegedly failing to enforce court rulings. The dispute stems from the 2001 bankruptcy of former Belgian national airline Sabena. The Belgian government and other Sabena shareholders want money from Switzerland's SAirGroup, which they say caused the bankruptcy by missing a major payment to Sabena.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ahmadinejad defiant

Leader dismisses nuclear deadline, removes election rival from post

Iran's president yesterday dismissed a year-end deadline set by the Obama administration and the West for Tehran to accept a UN-drafted deal to swap enriched uranium for nuclear fuel. The United States warned Iran to take the deadline seriously.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also accused the U.S. of fabricating a purported Iranian secret document that appears to lay out a plan for developing a critical component of an atomic bomb.

Ahmadinejad's remarks underscored Tehran's defiance in the nuclear standoff — and also sought to send a message that his government has not been weakened by the protest movement sparked by June's disputed presidential election. He spoke a day after the latest opposition protest by tens of thousands mourning a dissident cleric who died over the weekend.

Late yesterday, the website of state-run TV said Ahmadinejad had appointed a new chief of Iran's prestigious Art Academy, removing opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi from the post.

> **"We are not intimidated. If Iran wanted to make a bomb, we would be brave enough to tell you."**
> Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

U.S. President Barack Obama has set a rough deadline of the end of this year for Iran to respond to an offer of dialogue on the nuclear issue.

Washington and its allies are warning of new, tougher sanctions on Iran if it doesn't respond.

The UN-proposed deal is the centerpiece of the West's diplomatic effort. Under the deal, Tehran would ship most of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium abroad to be processed into fuel rods, which would ease the West's fears that the material could be used to produce a nuclear weapon.

Iran, which denies it seeks to build a bomb, has balked at the deal's terms.

The international community can give Iran "as many deadlines as they want, we don't care," Ahmadinejad said in a speech to thousands of supporters in the southern city of Shiraz.

Ahmadinejad dismissed the threat of sanctions, saying Iran wants talks "under just conditions where there is mutual respect."

"We told you that we are not afraid of sanctions against us, and we are not intimidated," he said, addressing the West. "If Iran wanted to make a bomb, we would be brave enough to tell you."

The U.S. responded sternly, warning Iran's leader to take the year-end deadline seriously. "It is a very real deadline for the international community," said White House press secretary Robert Gibbs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIKE ALQUINTO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soldiers distribute food to volcano evacuees yesterday.

Eruption imminent?

PHILIPPINES Almost all of the 47,000 residents living on the slopes of the rumbling Mayon volcano in the central Philippines have moved to emergency shelters, and lava and earthquakes yesterday heralded what officials say could be a major eruption.

"Hazardous eruption ... can happen today or in the next few days," said chief state volcanologist Renato Solidum, adding that an eruption also may not happen. "Nobody has a 100 per cent accuracy."

Ash columns were seen rising during a cloud break and Solidum said his team recorded 1,266 volcanic quakes in last 24 hours, down from nearly 2,000 the previous day. He said that while the quakes were fewer, they were larger.

The emission of sulfur dioxide — an indication of magma rising inside the volcano — was measured at 6,530 tons per day, slightly less than 7,000 tons on Sunday, but still very high, Solidum said. The normal gas emission is 500 tons per day.

Mayon has erupted nearly 40 times over 400 years.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The Hidden Cost of Tickets and Accidents

Your Driving Record Impacts Your Your Car Insurance Rate

Just How Costly Are Tickets And Accidents?

Between paying fines, insurance deductibles, and other out-of-pocket expenses, most people understand tickets and accidents can be costly. What many people DON'T know is that there is usually another "hidden" cost which is just around the corner. It comes in the form of higher insurance rates. This is because insurance companies look at your driving record and insurance history, including any tickets or accidents you've had, as a key factor in setting their rates. And this is why drivers with cleaner driving records, on average, find they are able to obtain lower insurance rates.

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NO! For the driver with tickets and accidents, there is good news and hope of lowering your rate. In fact, there are some drivers with tickets or accidents that are actually paying LESS than similar drivers with clean driving records. Certain insurance companies actually target this type of risk and have competitive rates. The trick is finding those companies – which is easier than you think... if you know where to look.

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Rate Comparison

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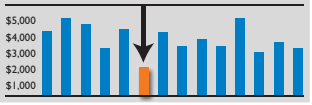
InsuranceHotline.com finds this rate for drivers – for FREE!



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Cuba warming to religion

Cuba's Roman Catholic cardinal will read a Christmas message on state TV, another small sign the once officially atheist government is warming to religion. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bethlehem **Gearing up for rush of tourists**

NASSER SHIYOUKHI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christian pilgrims light candles inside the Church of Nativity, believed by many to be the birthplace of Jesus Christ, in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem yesterday. Israeli Tourism Minister Stas Mesezhnikov said he is expecting about 70,000 tourists to head to the town for Christmas — on par with last year's level — despite a worldwide slowdown in tourism. Israeli and Palestinian officials have worked closely in recent years to coordinate the movement of pilgrims.

Freeing soldier not 'at any cost': Israel

Israel said yesterday it would not bargain "at any cost" to secure the release of a soldier held by Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip, and relayed a list of Palestinian prisoners that it wants to deport as part of a proposed swap between two bitter foes.

Israeli leaders are under immense domestic pressure to resolve the case of 23-year-old Sgt. Gilad Schalit, captured in a 2006 cross-border raid. Hamas, the target of Israel's devastating offensive in isolated Gaza a year ago, sees Schalit as a rich source of leverage for political and even economic gain.

Intense talks among Israel's top Cabinet ministers and security chiefs had raised hopes that a deal was close, but there were signs that differences remained.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak said Israel's top priority was to bring Schalit home, "not at any cost, but in every possible and appropriate way."

Yesterday Israeli media reported Israel had delivered a response to Hamas demands for the release of 1,000 Palestinians, many of whom were involved in attacks. Without identifying sources, the reports said Israel would approve a swap if Hamas agrees to the deportation of some prisoners.

An Israeli government official said the question of whether certain prisoners would return to the West Bank or be deported was "clearly" an issue. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release details of the talks.

A Palestinian official said that in addition to seeking to deport about 100 prisoners, Israel also refuses to free seven of those involved in the most violent attacks on Israelis, including bombing masterminds. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the talks.

A senior Hamas official, who also declined to be named, confirmed receipt of the Israeli answer. The Hamas government was holding its weekly meeting yesterday and the deal was expected to be on the agenda.

Many Israelis have taken the plight of Schalit to heart and fervently want him freed, even if the price is high.

Should Israel agree to Hamas' demands, the Islamic militants could receive a hefty boost in their rivalry with the Western-backed Fatah movement, which controls the West Bank.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prisoner exchange

- Prisoner exchanges are controversial in Israel because of their potential to encourage militants to take more hostages. A deal perceived as favouring Gaza's Islamic militant rulers would also seem to run counter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's call for an uncompromising war on Palestinian violence.

News in brief

GINBOT 7 An Ethiopian court sentenced five people to death — including an Ethiopian professor teaching at a U.S. university — and 33 to life in prison yesterday for being members of a terror group and conspiring to assassinate government officials. Those convicted have been accused of being members of the Ginbot 7 — May 15 in the Ethiopian calendar — which refers to Ethiopia's election day in 2005 when postelection violence killed close to 200 people. Among those sentenced to death was Berhanu Nega, an exiled opposition leader who was elected mayor of Addis Ababa in 2005. But Berhanu, currently an associate professor of economics at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, dismissed the legitimacy of the court and its sentence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rearm Georgia, U.S. senator urges
Senior Republican Senator Richard Lugar is urging the Obama administration and European allies to consider rearming Georgia. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

China defends plan to execute Briton

China yesterday dismissed an appeal from Prime Minister Gordon Brown to spare a British man set to be executed next week for drug smuggling, saying he had a fair trial despite concerns he suffers mental health problems and was duped into the crime.

Akmal Shaikh, 53, was sentenced in a half-hour trial in October 2008 for taking a suitcase containing almost four kilograms of heroin into the far west Chinese city of Urumqi.

China's highest court has rejected his appeal and his execution is set for Dec. 29. He would be the first European to be executed in China in a half-century.

Gordon Brown

Family members have not been allowed to visit Shaikh since his arrest in 2007 and say he has a history of unbalanced behaviour.

Downing Street said Brown had written Monday to "express dismay" over the court's upholding of the death sentence.

British human rights group Reprieve says Shaikh, a small business owner from London, was lured to China by two men who promised to help him launch a career in pop music. He was arrested travelling on a flight from Tajikistan to Urumqi.

Reprieve said Shaikh's legal options have been exhausted and his last chance appeared to be clemency. It appealed to Chinese President Hu Jintao to grant Shaikh a pardon. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Italy calls out the army as snow swamps Milan

STORM Italy sent hundreds of soldiers to the streets of Milan yesterday to help ease traffic after heavy snowstorms and freezing temperatures forced airports to be closed and trains to be halted.

The Defence Ministry said that some 600 soldiers had begun to shovel snow, while another 200 were being deployed.

Snowfall has wreaked havoc on traffic in Milan, Italy's financial capital, and elsewhere in the north of the country. Hundreds of flights have been cancelled and thousands of train passengers have been stranded at railway stations or on carriages, often without heating, according to Italian news reports.

Although airports across northern Italy reopened during the day, they were still backed up with passengers and only a fraction of scheduled flights were taking off, according to national carrier Alitalia.

The bad weather is forecast to continue. Venice authorities warned residents of the lagoon city they expected rising winds from the south to cause an exceptionally high tide early today. The tide is forecast to reach 140 centimetres, meaning large parts of the historic city would be flooded. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANTONIO CALANNI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Italian soldiers hold shovels yesterday as they walk past the gothic cathedral known as the Duomo in Milan, Italy.

Judge rejects 'necessity defence'

ABORTION A U.S. judge ruled yesterday that Kansas law doesn't allow a so-called "necessity defence" in the trial of a man charged with killing one of the nation's few late-term abortion providers.

The decision was another blow to lawyers for 51-year-old Scott Roeder, who has confessed to shooting Dr. George Tiller May 31 and says it was necessary to save unborn children.

Judge Warren Wilbert cited a 1993 case involving an abortion clinic in which the Kansas Supreme Court said that to allow the personal beliefs of a person to justify criminal activity to stop a law-abiding citizen from exercising his rights would "be tantamount to sanctioning anarchy."

But he noted the case involving Roeder has elevated the argument to whether it is justified to take one life for another.

Roeder, who confessed to the shooting Nov. 9, said he had no regrets about killing Tiller and suggested the necessity defence should be the only contested issue at his trial. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sleigh display reindeer slain
Dutch police have shot dead four reindeer that escaped from a Christmas sleigh display, fearing they might run into traffic and cause accidents. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pakistan press club attacked

A suicide bomber struck yesterday outside a press club in the northwestern city of Peshawar, killing three people and wounding 17 in an attack that underscored the danger to journalists trying to cover Pakistan's Taliban-led insurgency.

Militants have threatened, attacked and killed journalists in an attempt to prevent reporting they deem critical of the Taliban. Journalists say they also face pressure from government operatives trying to influence coverage.

The combination has made Pakistan one of the most dangerous environments in which to work, rivalling conflict zones like Iraq and Somalia, according to media monitoring groups.

A policeman tried to search the suicide bomber as he approached the press club's gate yesterday, but the man resisted and was able to trigger his explosives, said the city's police chief, Liaquat Ali Khan. The dead included the officer and an accountant for the club, authorities said.

A woman who was at the site died of cardiac arrest caused by shock, said Dr. Sahib Gul at a hospital in Peshawar where casualties were taken. Seventeen others were wounded, many of whom were on a bus passing the press club, Gul said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

45 Number of journalists killed in Pakistan since 2001, according to Mazhar Abbas, former secretary of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. Other reporters have been threatened or kidnapped by militants, or detained by intelligence services.

Spain **Christmas bonanza**

VICTOR R. CAMANO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Employees of a lottery office celebrate after selling the winning number in Spain's Christmas lottery, billed as one of the world's richest. Known as "El Gordo," or "The Fat One," the lottery doles out almost $3.5 billion in prize money.

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Woman held for threat to kill Michelle Obama

ARREST A woman accused of telling the Secret Service she would "blow away" Michelle Obama was in federal custody yesterday as the president's family planned to travel to Hawaii.

Kristy Lee Roshia, 35, was charged with threatening a family member of the president and assaulting a federal agent after being arrested Saturday a short distance from the Kailua home where the Obama family planned to stay during a holiday visit later this week.

Michelle Obama

Roshia called the Secret Service's Boston office last month and told a receptionist, "I will kill Michelle Obama" and "I will kill Marines," according to a Secret Service affidavit. During the same call, she said she would "blow away" Michelle Obama, the document states.

The public defender's office in Honolulu could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Roshia has a history of leaving rambling messages and sending poems, love letters and photos of herself to the Secret Service, according to the affidavit.

As early as 2004, she told the agency that "although her mission is to assassinate the president, she has no desire to hurt him," the document states.

The affidavit said Roshia acknowledged to agents before her arrest that she had threatened the first lady.

Roshia reportedly also said she knew where the family would be staying in Hawaii, and that the reason she had travelled to Hawaii in September was "to protect Obama."

Roshia was also charged with lunging at a Secret Service agent during her arrest, hitting his arms and face. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

France warns of unrest in Guinea

CIVIL STRIFE The French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, warned yesterday that Guinea could face civil war if the West African nation's wounded junta leader returns home from Morocco, where he is receiving medical treatment.

Capt. Moussa "Dadis" Camara was shot by his aide-de-camp early this month and evacuated to Morocco for emergency surgery. The state of his health is unclear, and the nation of 10 million has been essentially without a government since that time.

A recent UN report concluded Camara was likely responsible for the murder of 156 protesters and the rape or mutilation of at least 109 others in September. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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REMOTE KEYLESS ENTRY	Standard	Not Available	Not Available
POWER DOOR LOCKS	Standard	Standard	Not Available
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Mozambique leader wants to beat fraud with a coalition

Mozambique's main opposition leader says the governing party is so entrenched through fraud, the only way he can get power is to share it. So Afonso Dhlakama is calling for a coalition. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Runaway teen's mystery trip

How did solo-sailor wannabe end up in the Caribbean?

Just four months ago, Laura Dekker was a carefree 13-year-old with an extraordinary dream.

She wanted to become the youngest person to sail solo around the world.

Yesterday, police hauled her home — clutching a suitcase and guitar — from a mystery trip to the Caribbean.

And child care workers sought to remove her from her father's custody.

Dutch judges scuppered Laura's dream in August when they ruled she was too inexperienced to set off alone in a sailboat.

They came to the same conclusion in October.

"I don't think she did it alone, but we are not sure."
Bernhard Jens

So Laura flew to the Dutch Caribbean territory of St. Maarten.

How did she get there? Police are not sure.

European rules bar children from flying alone on intercontinental flights without permission from a parent.

Laura's lawyer said she sidestepped the European regulations by flying out of Paris on her New Zealand passport.

Laura was born on a boat in New Zealand while her parents were sailing around the world.

Police are investigating whether she got help boarding the plane.

"I don't think she did it alone, but we are not sure," said police spokesperson Bernhard Jens.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Worldbeaters

- The youngest person to sail solo around the world is 17-year-old Mike Perham of Britain.
- Australian Jessica Watson, 16, is currently trying to beat Perham's record.

GERRY KIKO WILSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Heading home: Laura Dekker in St. Maarten on Monday.

She did aerobics until she was 100

An inspiration for Obama, Cooper dies aged 107

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ann Nixon Cooper

LANDMARK Ann Nixon Cooper, the centenarian lauded by U.S. President Barack Obama in his election night speech last year, has died. She was 107.

Obama in his 2008 speech called Cooper an example of "the heartbreak and the hope" of the past century.

Yesterday, Obama praised Cooper's life of service and offered his condolences.

"It is especially meaningful for me that she lived to cast a vote on Election Day 2008," he said.

"It was a life that captured the spirit of community and change and progress that is at the heart of the American experience; a life that inspired and will continue to inspire me."

Cooper was an active woman who did aerobics until she was 100, took the stairs to her bedroom until she broke her hip last year and wore out friends 20 years her junior on shopping trips.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

RULING Bosnia's constitution discriminates against Jews and Roma because it does not allow them to run for parliament or president, the European Court of Human Rights said in a ruling yesterday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Lithuania agency helped CIA set up secret prisons: Panel

Lithuania's intelligence agency helped the CIA set up secret prisons in the Baltic country, but it's unclear whether they were actually used to interrogate terror suspects, a parliamentary panel said yesterday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Foreigner contracted Auschwitz theft: Cops

A foreigner outside Poland commissioned the brazen theft of the infamous Auschwitz sign "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work Sets You Free") and detectives must expand their investigation beyond the country's borders, officials said.

In a bid to learn more about the escapade, the investigators held a re-enactment of the theft by the three men who confessed to taking the sign from the former Nazi death camp at Auschwitz.

Prosecutor cites 'glaring negligence' in security system

• Despite the spectre of an international link to the crime, prosecutor Artur Wrona said the investigation so far had exposed "glaring negligence" in the security system at the Auschwitz museum that let the burglars act "undisturbed." He said they drove to the then-closed museum in a sports car after dark Thursday, but found they needed tools to get the sign down. They went to a shop and bought tools including a wrench, he said.

Based on the evidence gathered since the theft Friday, the crime was commissioned by a "person living outside Poland" and police were seeking help from Interpol and others as they investigate, said Artur Wrona, the chief prosecutor in Krakow.

Polish media have reported, without citing any sources, that someone in Sweden could be under suspicion, but Wrona refused to confirm or deny the claims. In Stockholm, a Swedish police official said they have not been contacted about any links. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

*Sony Ericsson X1, HTC Magic and BlackBerry Bold 9000 (white) available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice and data plan having min. $45 monthly service fee. Nokia N86 8MP and LG Eve available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice and data plan. All other devices featured available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice plan. Early cancellation fees apply.
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France plans bill to ban public use of Muslim veils

A French parliamentarian said yesterday he would file legislation to bar Muslim women from wearing veils that hide their faces in public. President Nicolas Sarkozy has said burka-like veils are "not welcome" in France, and a parliamentary panel has been gathering information on the subject to release in a non-binding report expected next month.

Lawmaker Jean-Francois Cope, who heads the president's UMP party in the National Assembly, the lower chamber, suggested yesterday he would submit his bill before the panel issues its report. He said he wants the veil banned not just from public buildings but also in the streets of France. "We want a ban in public areas," Cope said.

Muslim leaders and secular experts have told the panel that a full ban could stigmatize all Muslims and would pose enforcement problems. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Minority

• Only a tiny minority of Muslim women in France wear the extreme covering — not required by Islam. Authorities worry such dress may be a gateway to extremism, and say it amounts to an insult to women while also going against the deeply secular nature of France.

News in brief

CEMETERIES Austria's government said yesterday it would pay $28.5 million US for the restoration of the country's Jewish cemeteries, many of them in a sad state more than six decades after the end of the brutal Nazi era. The announcement — following a high-level meeting in the chancellery — brings to a close years of acrimony over who should fund the much-needed endeavour. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MORE GO. LESS DOUGH.

SE model shown with Podium Edition Package††

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	2010 PONTIAC G5 SE AUTO	2010 HYUNDAI ELANTRA L SEDAN	2010 HONDA CIVIC DX SEDAN
CASH PURCHASE PRICE	$15,648	$15,849***	$15,990***
AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION	Standard	Optional	Optional
HEAD CURTAIN SIDE IMPACT AIRBAGS	Standard	Not Available	Standard
AIR CONDITIONING	Standard	Optional	Optional
16" ALUMINUM WHEELS	Standard	15" Steel	15" Steel
REMOTE KEYLESS ENTRY	Standard	Not Available	Not Available
POWER DOOR LOCKS	Standard	Standard	Not Available
HP / TORQUE	155/150	138/150	140/128
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	5-year/160,000 km	5-year/100,000 km	5-year/100,000 km

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**Value of additional features based on dealer pricing. Vehicle comparison is based on 2010 G5 SE (2AL69/2AL37 1SA + MX0), 2010 Civic DX Sedan (FA1E2AEX) and 2010 Elantra L Sedan (D4T). ***Vehicle specification and purchase price according to the information available on the manufacturer's website at time of printing. Note: Purchase Price based on MSRP less CDA & Holiday Bonus (Freight Out).

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$0	$99
$1,000	$93
$3,000	$80

HWY: 5.9L/100 km (48 mpg)
CITY: 8.7L/100 km (32 mpg)Δ

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INCLUDES • 155 HP 2.2L ECOTEC® VVT Engine • **Automatic Transmission • Air Conditioning • Power Windows, Door Locks and Mirrors** • 60/40 Split-Folding Rear Seatbacks • Driver and Front-passenger Frontal Air Bags • Head Curtain Side-impact Air Bags • Auxiliary Audio Input Jack • Remote Keyless Entry System • 16-in. Wheels • 4-wheel ABS

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CITY: 7.8L/100 km (36 mpg)Δ

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Comment

Jim and the magic ministry

Flaherty stuck with maintaining financial recovery illusion

TheWestView

You've got to feel sorry for Jim Flaherty, who's in charge of the Ministry of Magic these days.

Oops, sorry. That's the Finance Ministry. Although Flaherty probably wonders if Harry Potter would be better suited to the job.

Take the "recovery," for instance.

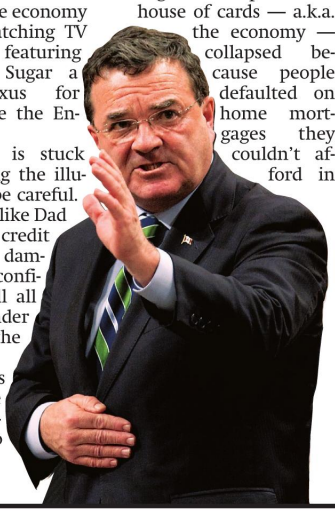
If that's not magic, I don't know what is. Nothing has really happened since 2008, when we woke up with the mother of all hangovers, induced by a decade-long orgy of spending money we haven't got.

All at once, half the value we assumed was in our homes and businesses simply disappeared. We scurried under our beds and refused to come out. Until now — even though nothing has changed. Nonetheless, magicians, er, economists, now declare the recession over, thanks to Joe Consumer, back spending money he hasn't got.

I'm not making this up. Less than a year after the world's leaders pumped all their spare cash into the banks to keep the economy afloat, we're watching TV commercials featuring Daddy buying Sugar a brand-new Lexus for Christmas, while the Envys look on.

And Flaherty is stuck with maintaining the illusion. He has to be careful. If he's too much like Dad ranting about credit card bills, he'll damage "consumer confidence" and we'll all crawl back under the bed, ending the "recovery."

The trance is not entire. The consumer confidence index is up 3.7 in December — we're confident in our short-term finances and employment status, but we're still cautious about the future. Still, we're 26.2 per cent more confident (deluded?) than we were at this time last year.

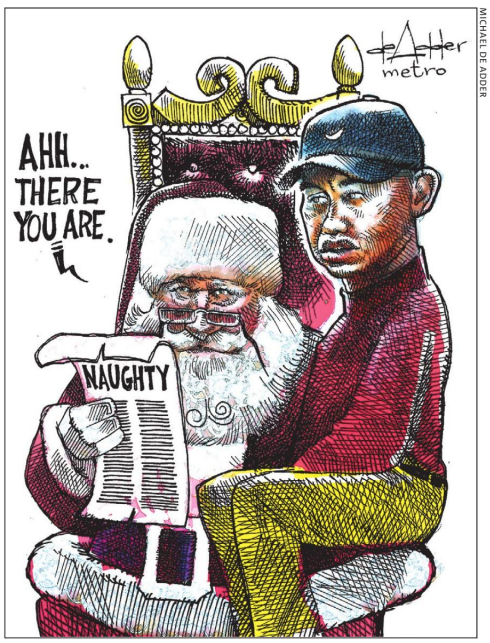

Jim Flaherty

Ever the responsible magician, Flaherty is trying to manage the spell. The house of cards — a.k.a. the economy — collapsed because people defaulted on home mortgages they couldn't afford in the first place. So if interest rates go up — and up they must go if we don't want runaway inflation (bad magic) — people who depend on cheap money will go down and the "recovery" will be over. Flaherty says he will make it tougher to walk into a mortgage: Requiring an actual cash down payment or limiting the term of the mortgage. What? No more 30-year mortgages at two per cent?

Predictably, some magicians worry Flaherty will put a damper on the economy, which, it appears, is fuelled 100 per cent by pixie dust. So, as you sit by the warmth of the fire this holiday season, bolstering your confidence with a bowl of punch, you might spare a moment of sympathy for Tiny Jim.

And it's a good time to count our blessings while we still can — we're OK — at least until the visit of Christmas Yet to Come.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting; vancouverletters@metronews.ca.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Online chatter

Asked on Twitter: What's your favourite holiday tradition?

TORONTO
@bodsworth Unwrapping new pajamas every Christmas Eve, so come Christmas morning we look fresh and clean for gift giving pics!

HALIFAX
@raine_angel my family has a special advent tree decorated with special ornaments and a chain link. Every day we remove one link!

CALGARY
@jess4002 we love listening and singing along to christmas music all throughout december! even the terrible christmas songs.

EDMONTON
@lukesheds being passive aggressive toward relatives?

Follow Metro on Twitter for news updates and more: @metrotoronto

@M4TTW4RD ski-doing and skating with my entire family at long island lake on boxing day. :D

VANCOUVER
@kirksettle definitely the enormous family get-togethers that are almost unreasonably big, like three turkeys for 40 people every x-mas.
@chatkiller hmm ... It would have to be putting up the Christmas tree with my folks, along with putting up lights and ornaments.
@gayvancouver Our fave holiday tradition is our annual Santa photo. Two grown men on Santa's knee certainly livens things up in the mall!

Word on the street: What's your favourite holiday tradition?

David Sadai
Toronto
A: My girlfriend's parents still put "from Santa Claus" on the gifts ... and they're already under the tree.

Laura Gentili
Toronto
A: Everyone comes over at 4 p.m., and we all eat a huge dinner and then open gifts.

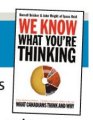
Victor Bellaire
Toronto
A: I enjoy the smell of the real Christmas tree ... the smell of the turkey cooking in the oven, and sharing a meal with my family ... laughter at Christmas — that's what I enjoy.

Ashley Young
Edmonton
A: My favourite tradition would be Christmas baking before Christmas and then on Christmas Day, the whole process of gift opening and stockings. Stockings are my favourite.

Adam Cochrane
Calgary
A: We always did a Boxing Day buffet with family and friends and music and food.

Victoria Pianarosa
Bedford, N.S.
A: Making agnolotti with my in-laws. It's a fun thing that everyone in the family participates in. We cut it up and make the filling — then we eat them all. It usually takes a whole afternoon.

We Know What You're Thinking



88% The number of Canadians who have a plan on how to get home safely when going out to an activity where they might be drinking alcohol.

IPSOS REID

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Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

ONCE YOU KNOW, YOU'RE GOOD TO GO

STARTING SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2010, THERE WILL BE CHANGES TO SOME GO BUS SERVICES

12 – NIAGARA FALLS GO BUS

Two new eastbound trips will depart from Niagara Falls at 9:45 a.m. and 7:45 p.m. and connect to Lakeshore train service at Burlington GO Station on weekends and holidays.

Two new westbound trips will depart Burlington at 11:48 a.m. and 9:48 p.m., serve all stops and arrive in Niagara Falls at 1:03 p.m. and 11:03 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

There will be changes to some weekday and weekend trips including earlier departures.

The weekday eastbound 4:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 trips from Grimsby and the weekday westbound 1:48 a.m. and 8:56, and the 4:34 p.m., 7:08 and 9:48 trips from Burlington GO Station will be discontinued.

20 – MILTON-OAKVILLE GO BUS

There are changes to some trips including earlier departures.

21 – MILTON GO BUS

There are several new trips and changes to some trips including earlier departures.

25 – WATERLOO GO BUS

Six new Friday eastbound trips from the University of Waterloo will run express to Square One GO Bus Terminal. At Square One, there are GO Bus connections to downtown Toronto and Pearson Airport.

Three new westbound trips from Square One will run express to the University of Waterloo on Sundays or holiday Mondays.

There are changes to some trips including earlier departures.

31 – GEORGETOWN GO BUS

Two new eastbound trips will depart Brampton GO Station at 10:50 a.m. and 7:05 p.m., serve Shopper's World, Steeles & Rutherford, the Bramalea and Malton GO Stations, and arrive at the Union Station GO Bus Terminal at 11:45 a.m. and 8:05 p.m.

We're adding 12 new weekend and holiday trips between Brampton GO Station and Union Station.

There are changes to some existing trips including later departures from the University of Guelph and the Guelph Bus Terminal.

34 – BRAMPTON HWY. 427 GO BUS

There will be changes to some trips including earlier departures, and all trips will now also serve the Bramalea GO Station.

The weekday eastbound 5:45, 6:50, and 7:22 a.m. trips from Bramalea City Centre and the weekday westbound 3:20 and 4:50 p.m. trips from York Mills will be discontinued.

40 – SQUARE ONE-PEARSON-RICHMOND HILL CENTRE GO BUS

Service between Square One GO Bus Terminal and Pearson Airport will now be hourly.

52 – HWY. 407 EAST GO BUS

The 10:30 and 11:30 p.m. trips from York University with stops at Langstaff, Unionville, Centennial, Markham and Mount Joy GO Stations, will be discontinued.

65 – BARRIE-BRADFORD GO BUS

A new weekday southbound trip will depart Aurora GO Station at 8:35 a.m., serve the Aurora Rd. and Hwy. 404 Carpool Lot at 8:40, and arrive at the Union Station GO Bus Terminal at 9:30 a.m.

66 – NEWMARKET-HWY. 400 GO BUS

There are changes to some trips including earlier departures. Some trips have been discontinued so be sure to check the new schedule.

71 – STOUFFVILLE GO BUS

A new weekday southbound trip will depart Unionville GO Station at 9:25 a.m. and run express to Union Station GO Bus Terminal arriving at 10:00 a.m.

A new weekday southbound trip will depart Lincolnville GO Station at 12:30 p.m., serve the Stouffville, Mount Joy, Markham, Centennial and Unionville GO Stations, and arrive at Union at 1:40 p.m.

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Exploration companies merge

Two exploration companies that merged to form Goldstone Resources Ltd. said yesterday that shares of the new company will begin trading Dec. 24. Ontex Resources and Roxmark Mines will be delisted shortly after they combine to form Goldstone. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Business

DOLLAR	N.GAS	OIL	TSX
US 94.53¢	US $5.71	US $74.40	11,627.98
US 0.31¢	US 4.6¢	US 68¢	73.26

EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Bank grows in Dubai

Scotiabank opening precious-metals branch

The Bank of Nova Scotia said yesterday it has been approved to set up independent operations in Dubai's financial district, making it the first Canadian bank to do so.

The licensing clearance from the Dubai International Financial Center allows the bank's ScotiaMocatta division to open an independent branch in one of the Middle East's hubs for international finance.

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SCANLIFE

A sales boom has shot China past the U.S. as the world's largest auto market, with many customers still carless. Scan this barcode for the full story.

ScotiaMocatta has operated in Dubai since 1998 through the National Bank of Dubai to provide financial services to gold traders, jewellers and others.

The move comes as debt-burdened Dubai struggles to retain its prominence as a centre for Middle East investors and traders.

Pramod Mohan, a senior executive at Scotiabank's Dubai branch, said the bank recognized the importance of establishing a stand-alone presence in the region as the precious metals market in the Middle East continues to grow.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

C.A. Bancorp shareholders urged to reject takeover bid

HOSTILE The board of C.A. Bancorp is urging shareholders to reject a hostile takeover bid by Vancouver-based Maxam Acquisition Corp., saying the offer is "financially inadequate."

Maxam wants to buy the Toronto-based company for $1.22 per share, valuing C.A. at $32.6 million.

Timothy Unwin, chairman of a special committee set up by C.A. to evaluate the offer, said the Maxam offer represented a 49.9 per cent discount to C.A.'s net asset value and added Maxam had been buying C.A.'s shares at a price higher than its takeover offer.

C.A. also put a "poison pill" shareholder rights plan into effect last week.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Maestro acquires seniors' home

GUELPH Maestro Real Estate Advisors has bought The Royal on Gordon seniors' home in Guelph for $16.7 million, its second recent investment under a three-year plan to generate $1.2 billion worth of new assets under management, the company said.

The Guelph purchase, coming a month after acquiring Scarlett Heights seniors' residence in Etobicoke, brings the number of Maestro residences to 49 in four provinces.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NYSE Darth Vader pays a visit

HENNY RAYA ABRAMS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Star Wars' Darth Vader, right, and R2-D2, centre, are escorted yesterday by storm troopers on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York. To celebrate the lasting appeal of the Star Wars saga, Lucasfilm Ltd. executives and the Star Wars characters visited the exchange and rang the opening bell.

Parkland buys Bluewave for $214 million

DISTRIBUTER Parkland Income Fund says it will become the largest independent petroleum distributor in Canada with the $214-million purchase of Bluewave Energy Limited Partnership, a privately held company based in Dartmouth, N.S.

Merger

- Earlier this month, Calgary-based Husky Energy acquired 98 gas stations from Suncor Energy after regulators forced Suncor to sell its Sunoco and Petro-Canada outlets as a condition for merging with Petro-Canada in August.

Bluewave distributes Shell-branded fuels and has operations across the country except in Manitoba, Quebec and Newfoundland.

The Parkland takeover adds a new market for the Alberta retailer, which focuses on non-urban markets.

With the acquisition, Parkland will be in every province except Newfoundland and Labrador.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Toronto Stock Exchange Tower
Woodbine Centre
Yorkdale Mall
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2365 Yonge St. (north of Eglinton)
455 Danforth Ave.
720 King St. W
38 - 1500 Royal York Rd.
8 - 1750 The Queensway
1184 Kennedy Rd.
3 - 2610 Weston Rd.
1061 St. Clair Ave. W
104 - 5050 Dufferin St.
25 Davenport Rd.
1158 Warden Ave.

WEST

Burlington Mall
Mapleview Mall
Milton Crossroads Centre
420 Main St.

Brampton
Bramalea City Centre
2880 Queen St. E (Hwy. 7 & Airport Rd.)
55 Mountainash Rd. (Springdale Square)
10 - 80 Pertosa Dr.

Mississauga
Dixie Outlet Mall
Erin Mills Town Centre
Heartland Town Centre
Square One
Winston Churchill & 401
2458 Dundas St. W
6535B Mississauga Rd.
G16 - 3024 Hurontario St.
101 - 6200 Dixie Rd.
9 - 34 Bristol Rd. E
2 - 4920 Tomken Rd.

Oakville
Oakville Place
RioCan Burloak
18 - 2501 Third Line
760 Pacific Rd.

NORTH

Markham
Markville Shopping Centre
Pacific Mall

Newmarket
Upper Canada Mall
1100 Gorham St.

Richmond Hill
Hillcrest Shopping Centre
4 - 11005 Yonge St.
9301 Bathurst St.

Thornhill
Promenade Mall
7171 Yonge St. (Galleria)
7378 Yonge St.

Vaughan
Vaughan Mills Outlet Mall
3 - 10019 Keele St.
2 - 160 Cidermill Ave.
3 - 4000 Hwy. 7

Woodbridge
A7 - 4220 Steeles Ave. W

EAST

Ajax
RioCan Durham

Pickering
Pickering Town Centre

Oshawa
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Senators slash ticket prices

The Ottawa Senators are slashing ticket prices between 20 and 30 per cent for a nine-game stretch starting next month. Beginning Jan. 1, the NHL club will offer a 20 per cent reduction in single-game ticket prices for eight contests and a 30 per cent cut for another. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sports

Marquis ready to lead

Jason Marquis, left, says he's ready to fill the role of veteran leader for a young Washington Nationals pitching staff. The free-agent right-hander signed a $15-million US, two-year contract yesterday. He joins a staff whose rotation at times last season consisted of second-year player John Lannan and four rookies. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EDITOR: DON.MCHOULL@METRONEWS.CA

Jays close to landing Morrow

The Toronto Blue Jays are on the verge of completing their second trade under new general manager Alex Anthopoulos, acquiring pitcher Brandon Morrow from the Seattle Mariners for reliever Brandon League and a prospect.

League was in Seattle yesterday afternoon where he took a physical, and Morrow was bound for Dunedin, Fla., to take his examination later in the day.

Barring any setbacks, an announcement looked likely for today, one week after the Blue Jays dealt ace Roy Halladay to the Philadelphia Phillies in a four-team swap that landed the Mariners lefty Cliff Lee.

Brandon Morrow

This trade isn't nearly as big, but features an exchange of electric arms that have been inconsistent at the big-league level. The Mariners are also getting 20-year-old, single-A outfielder Yohermyn Chavez, according to multiple reports.

Morrow, 25, was the fifth overall pick in the 2006 draft. He looked like a future closer during a breakout 2008 when he recorded 10 saves, but took a step backwards last season when he battled arm injuries.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Kaberle keeps on scoring

Leafs defenceman on pace to lead team in points

Earlier in the season, it was nothing more than a curiosity. But now, with the halfway point of the season almost here, Tomas Kaberle remains positioned to take a run at a bit of Maple Leafs' history.

No Leaf defenceman has ever topped the team in scoring at season's end. Heading into Game 38 on Long Island tonight, however, Kaberle not only leads Toronto, he is widening the gap.

Kaberle has 33 points. Matt Stajan is next with 28 followed by Niklas Hagman and Alexei Ponikarovsky, who have 25 points each.

Kaberle said leading the team in points is not something that concerns him.

"I'm not looking at it that way. Obviously, points are good but it has a lot to do with team effort. I've got a lot of help from teammates," he said.

"It doesn't matter who is leading the scoring, we just want to be in a playoff position. We've been doing a lot better job lately so we have to keep it up and get into eighth spot. Stats are something you look at at the end of the season."

Still, Kaberle is quietly putting together a remarkable offensive season.

PAUL HUNTER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Maple Leafs defenceman Tomas Kaberle practises yesterday.

The 31-year-old is on track for 73 points, which would better his career high of 67, attained in 2005-06. And with Kaberle a mainstay on the Toronto power play, where he has 17 points, it seems unlikely his pace will slow. Kaberle is also tied for the lead in points among NHL defenceman with Washington's Mike Green.

Mike Komisarek is not surprised by his frequent partner's success. When he was with Montreal, Komisarek said the Canadians would game plan around slowing Kaberle and he has come to appreciate his skill even more as a teammate.

"He just sees how things happen out there differently than everyone else," said Komisarek.

"His decision making under pressure is fantastic. He's unbelievable. On the power play, he's finding seams, he's finding holes. He gets that puck and it seems like he freezes all four penalty killers and it opens up a door for someone else on the ice."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Team record

- Tomas Kaberle's current pace would get him close to Toronto's team record for points by a defenceman. Ian Turnbull had 79 and Borje Salming had 78 during the 1976-77 season.

Bosh looking forward to Christmas with his daughter

It will be nice for Chris Bosh to get back to Dallas for a couple days during the Christmas break, a chance to relax with his family, exchange gifts and eat and hang out.

But that will be nothing compared to the real celebration that will come back in Toronto in the couple weeks following Friday.

That's when Trinity, his 13-month-old wisp of a daughter, arrives and the excitement really begins.

Chris Bosh

There is nothing quite like Christmas with a tiny one, all gifts and wrapping paper and making memories and it's something the 25-year-old dad is pretty pumped about.

"I've got a house full of toys for her," Bosh said yesterday. "It's going to be fun."

It will be the first "real" Christmas for father and daughter. Trinity would have been barely a month old a year ago, unable to really comprehend what was going on around her.

"This is the first one she's going to be spoiled at," said Bosh.

"She can rip open stuff now."

Before getting a few days with his daughter, Bosh will take advantage of a break in the schedule to get home to Dallas. The Raptors play tonight in Detroit but don't play again until Sunday afternoon.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sports in brief

ARGOS The Toronto Argonauts signed veteran guard Taylor Robertson to a contract extension yesterday that will see him remain with the CFL club through the 2011 season. The six-foot-six, 317-pound native of Kingston, Ont., joined the Argos in a 2007 trade with Calgary.

STADIUM The CFL's B.C. Lions will play in a 27,500-seat temporary stadium located on the site of the old Empire Stadium during the 2010 season. The Vancouver Whitecaps will also begin their inaugural Major League Soccer season in 2011 at the temporary facility.

BLUE BOMBERS The Winnipeg Blue Bombers released veteran middle linebacker Barrin Simpson yesterday. Simpson spent four seasons in Winnipeg, appearing in 52 regular-season games, three playoff contests and a Grey Cup.

BILLS Buffalo Bills cornerback Terrence McGee has been placed on injured reserve because of a rotator cuff injury. The team also bolstered its banged-up quarterback ranks by re-signing former third-stringer Gibran Hamdan. The moves were announced yesterday as Buffalo prepares to play at Atlanta this weekend.

STEELERS Wide receiver Joey Galloway has been added to the Pittsburgh Steelers' roster as the replacement for Limas Sweed. Sweed was placed on injured reserve Monday with a non-football related illness. Coach Mike Tomlin would not reveal any details of Sweed's condition yesterday.

BOXING The megafight between Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr. has been thrown into jeopardy. Mayweather's camp is demanding the fighters submit to Olympic-type drug testing in the weeks leading up to the bout.

SOCCER Canada will play an international soccer friendly in Jamaica Jan. 31. The game will take place in Kingston at the National Soccer Stadium. Canada and Jamaica most recently met for the 2009 CONCACAF Gold Cup. Canada won 1-0.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Orioles sign Atkins
Third baseman Garrett Atkins and the Baltimore Orioles finalized their $4.5-million US, one-year contract yesterday. His deal calls for a $4-million salary next year and includes an $8.5-million club option for 2011 with a $500,000 buyout. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Evans refocused as an underdog

A former champion who lost his title defence, Rashad Evans is now the hungry challenger

Like training partner Georges St-Pierre before him, Rashad Evans has learned first-hand the difference between winning a title and keeping it.

It's a painful lesson. But one that St-Pierre has used to make himself a better mixed martial arts fighter.

Rashad Evans

Some seven months after losing the UFC light-heavyweight championship to Lyoto Machida in his first title defence at UFC 98, Evans returns to the cage at UFC 108 looking to prove that, having picked himself off the floor, he is a better man for it.

Evans, who meets Thiago Silva (14-1) Jan. 2 in Las Vegas, acknowledges that as champion he was not prepared for the intensity of challengers like Machida.

"They go all out, man," he said from his training camp in Denver.

"If you're not ready to go all out and meet them with the same intensity, then there's going to be some problems.

"And I've definitely got a great deal of respect for those champions who go out there and do it time after time, like a Matt Hughes, like a Tito Ortiz, like a Georges St-Pierre, and a B.J. Penn. Guys that go out there and always rise to the occasion, always have great fights."

Though Evans showed great resilience in his loss, Machida finally put him away at the fence, tagging him with a right before hammering him with a left that sent Evans flopping backwards.

Both Evans and his camp have acknowledged their strategy was flawed.

To make matters worse, Evans said he executed the errant game plan poorly.

But the 30-year-old Evans says he is looking forward, not backwards.

The May defeat left him "humbled big time," but may actually have been a positive.

"I think having a loss was probably the best thing for me, because (for) one thing it helped me refocus and get my mind set on the way that I need to fight."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SCOREBOARD

NHL

NHL OVERALL STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
d-New Jersey	35	26	8	1	106	75	53
d-Washington	36	22	8	6	130	100	50
d-Buffalo	35	22	10	3	94	76	47
Pittsburgh	37	25	11	1	116	95	51
Boston	35	17	11	7	90	87	41
Atlanta	35	18	13	4	115	108	40
Ottawa	36	18	14	4	100	103	40
Florida	38	16	15	7	111	122	39
NY Rangers	36	17	16	3	99	102	37
Montreal	38	17	18	3	97	107	37
Tampa Bay	36	13	14	9	91	109	35
TORONTO	**37**	**13**	**16**	**8**	**106**	**130**	**34**
NY Islanders	37	13	17	7	90	120	33
Philadelphia	35	15	18	2	95	103	32
Carolina	36	9	21	6	89	131	24

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
d-Chicago	34	23	8	3	103	71	49
d-San Jose	36	21	8	7	119	95	49
d-Colorado	38	21	11	6	113	110	48
Nashville	36	22	11	3	106	101	47
Los Angeles	37	22	12	3	111	108	47
Phoenix	37	22	13	2	96	85	46
Calgary	35	20	11	4	101	87	44
Detroit	36	18	13	5	98	96	41
Dallas	36	15	11	11	107	112	41
Vancouver	36	20	16	0	110	93	40
St. Louis	35	16	14	5	91	97	37
Minnesota	36	17	16	3	93	103	37
Anaheim	35	14	14	7	99	111	35
Columbus	37	14	16	7	105	131	35
Edmonton	36	15	17	4	107	120	34

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

San Jose at Chicago
Anaheim at Colorado
Nashville at Vancouver

NBA

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Charlotte 88 Detroit 76
Washington 105 Philadelphia 98
New York 88 Chicago 81
Indiana at Boston
Golden State at Memphis
Atlanta at Minnesota
L.A. Clippers at Houston
Portland at Dallas
Oklahoma City at L.A. Lakers

METRO HOCKEY POOL STANDINGS*

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NAME	LOCATION	GP	G	A	PTS
1. Joanne Doiron	NB, CA	415	173	256	429
2. Christian Gagnon	NB, CA	417	175	248	423
3. Kyle Turk	NS, CA	421	194	225	419
4. Cole Warren	NS, CA	422	151	267	418
4. Steve Ferguson	ON, CA	421	174	244	418
6. Jonathon Gremsperger	BC, CA	418	180	233	413
6. Kelly Wrishko	AB, CA	417	171	242	413
6. Paula Almeida-Stille		421	173	240	413
6. Stephen Stille	ON, CA	421	173	240	413
10. Rick Kit	ON, CA	417	179	232	411
11. Shawn Tschritter	AB, CA	417	171	239	410
12. Jean-Paul Osborne	QC, CA	413	169	238	407
13. Brian B	AB, CA	417	173	233	406
13. Claude Brunelle	BC, CA	424	167	239	406
13. Sarah Jackson	ON, CA	409	162	244	406

* Results exclude Quebec

markerzone.com metro

NBA's Christmas gift a real treat

Just in time for Christmas, here comes the matchup that was on the NBA's wish list in June.

The Kobe Bryant-LeBron James showdown didn't pan out last season, but now it arrives in Hollywood with the addition of basketball's biggest supporting actor: Shaquille O'Neal, formerly Bryant's teammate, now James' sidekick.

The Cleveland Cavaliers visit the Los Angeles Lakers Christmas Day, claiming top billing on a five-game schedule. And while the meeting is loaded with subplots, it also comes with a question.

Could this really be an NBA final preview?

"Without a doubt. Definitely," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. "They're going to be an elite team.

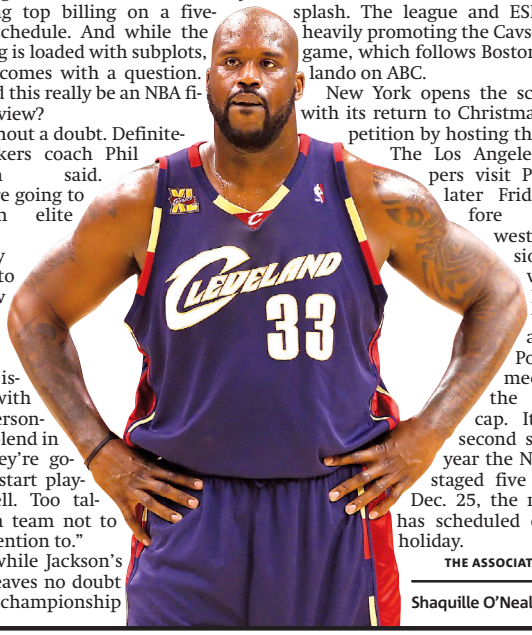
"They got off to a slow start, they had some issues with new personnel to blend in and they're going to start playing well. Too talented a team not to pay attention to."

But while Jackson's team leaves no doubt of its championship potential, Cleveland has been ordinary too often, more hype than hope, for some critics. Charles Barkley essentially pronounced the Cavaliers dead two weeks ago on TNT, saying there "are only two dogs in that (Eastern Conference) race. Orlando and Boston are by far the best two teams in the East."

The season is nearly two months old, but Christmas is traditionally when the NBA makes its first big splash. The league and ESPN are heavily promoting the Cavs-Lakers game, which follows Boston at Orlando on ABC.

New York opens the schedule with its return to Christmas competition by hosting the Heat. The Los Angeles Clippers visit Phoenix later Friday before Northwest Division rivals Denver and Portland meet in the nightcap. It's the second straight year the NBA has staged five games Dec. 25, the most it has scheduled on the holiday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Shaquille O'Neal

Vazquez headed back to Yankees as New York payroll climbs above $200M

BASEBALL Pitcher Javier Vazquez was traded back to the Yankees by the Atlanta Braves yesterday for outfielder Melky Cabrera, a move that pushed New York's payroll for next season to more than $200 million US.

New York also got left-hander Boone Logan as part of the deal, and the Braves obtained a pair of pitching prospects, left-hander Mike Dunn and right-hander Arodys Vizcaino, along with about $500,000.

"I didn't want to leave my first time out," Vazquez said. "I'm glad to be back."

The trade leaves New York with an opening in left field, allowing the Yankees to perhaps pursue Mark DeRosa. The club does not appear interested in re-signing Johnny Damon or going after free agents Matt Holliday and Jason Bay of Trail., B.C.

Atlanta had six starting pitchers and felt free to deal Vazquez, who was 14-10 for the Yankees in 2004. He started 10-5 with a 3.56 ERA that year and made his only all-star team, but faded to a 4-5 record and 6.92 ERA after the break, when he was bothered by an aching shoulder.

"The second half of '04, which was poor, cannot erase the long success he's had as a major league pitcher," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said.

His first stint in New York ended miserably, when he relieved Kevin Brown trailing 2-0 in Game 7 of the AL championship series against Boston and allowed a first-pitch grand slam to Damon, then gave up a two-run homer to Damon in the fourth.

"Hopefully, I can erase those memories," Vazquez said.

Vazquez was dealt to the Arizona Diamondbacks after the season in the trade that brought Randy Johnson to New York. He spent one year with Arizona, then went to the Chicago White Sox for three seasons.

Now 33, the right-hander was 15-10 with a 2.87 ERA and 238 strikeouts this year for the Braves, and finished fourth in NL Cy Young Award voting. Vazquez, whose career record is 142-139 in 12 seasons, will make $11.5 million next year and can become a free agent after the season.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

$64M

New York's top four starting pitchers — CC Sabathia, A.J. Burnett, Andy Pettitte and Javier Vazquez — will combine for $64 million in payroll next season. That's more than four teams paid their entire rosters last season.

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JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Visually impaired paralympian Brian McKeever, right, from Canmore, Alta., crosses the finish line yesterday to win the 50-kilometre event at the Haywood NorAm and Olympic Trials in Canmore. McKeever is trying to qualify for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic team.

On the verge of history

Visually impaired skier hopes to compete in Olympics

Visually impaired cross-country skier Brian McKeever is a step closer to becoming the first winter athlete to compete in both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The 30-year-old from Canmore, Alta., won an able-bodied 50-kilometre Noram race yesterday, a result he needed to be eligible for the Olympic team.

But the number of spots on Canada's Olympic roster hasn't been confirmed and it will be up to Cross Country Canada to decide if McKeever will race the 50K in Whistler in February.

"It's the best race I could lay down today and whatever happens, happens," McKeever said. "That's all you can ask, to have the best race on the day when it matters."

He won in two hours 21 minutes 8.5 seconds. Brent McMurtry of Calgary was second in 2:22:20.9 and Kevin Sandau of Calgary was third in 2:22:40.4.

McKeever has won seven Paralympic medals, including four gold.

"The message is, you put your mind to it and you work really hard for it you can do anything," said McKeever.

Five athletes have competed in both Paralympics and Olympics and all have been summer-sport athletes.

McKeever said it would be a dream come true to become the first winter athlete to accomplish the feat.

McKeever has Stargardt's disease, an inherited condition of macular degeneration that also claimed his father's eyesight. His vision is less than 10 per cent and all of it is peripheral. He compares it to seeing the "doughnut, but not the Timbit."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hundreds mourn Bengals' Henry at funeral

FOOTBALL Chris Henry's fiancée wept as she spoke about the late Cincinnati Bengals receiver yesterday, saying that while she often got credit for steering him clear of a trouble, he changed her life as well.

Henry, 26, was killed after he fell out of the bed of pickup truck driven by his fiancée, Loleini Tonga, during what police called a domestic dispute. Police are investigating, but no charges have been filed.

Tonga, wearing large sunglasses, paused to gather herself repeatedly as she spoke to hundreds of mourners at his funeral — including Henry's teammates — who filled the grandstands of a suburban New Orleans events centre. Tonga professed eternal love for Henry and promised to raise their children the way he would want.

"Can't nobody know the way I'm feeling right now. No one can explain the relationship that me and Chris had. In six years of knowing each other — through hard times, good times — we loved each other very much," she said. "People say I helped change his life. No. He changed mine."

Mourners clapped briefly as Tonga slowly made her way back to her front row seat.

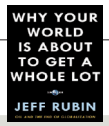
NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, Bengals players, coaches and members of the front office, as well as other NFL players including New Orleans Saints running back Reggie Bush, were among those who attendance. The Bengals wore black, round buttons on their lapels with Henry's No. 15.

Many from Henry's hometown of Belle Chasse wore red ribbons with a small photo of Henry that read: "In loving memory" and "Chris (Slim) Henry."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PATRICK SEMANSKY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

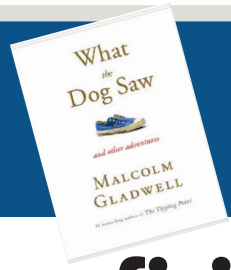
NFL commissioner Roger Goodell hugs Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Chad Ochocinco yesterday before a memorial service for late Bengals wide receiver Chris Henry in Westwego, La.



Even more business books for the holidays

For those who work in the financial sector Jeff Rubin is legendary. As CIBC World Markets' chief economist for over 20 years, Rubin's predictions were often unimaginable, yet on the mark. Check out his latest Why Your World is About to get a Whole lot Smaller. CRAIG LUND/FOR METRO CANADA

Workology



More biz book pics

Malcolm Gladwell has become one of Canada's most prolific and successful non fiction authors with his best selling books, Tipping Point, Blink, Outliers and ultimately his latest addition — What the Dog Saw. A perfect gift for the jetsetter or commuter. CRAIG LUND/FOR METRO CANADA

EDITOR: DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

BookReview

Biz book pics for the holidays

Age of Persuasion
How Marketing Ate Our Culture
Author: Terry O'Reilly & Mike Tennant
Publisher: Knopf Canada
Price: $32

If this book is anything like Terry O'Reilly's radio show, it will be a sure crowd pleaser.

Six Pixels of Separation
Author: Mitch Joel
Publisher: Grand Central
Price: $32.99

Mitch Joel is marketer cum author. As the president of a successful interactive marketing firm, Joel's book argues that with tools like Facebook the world is even smaller.

Switch
Author: Dan and Chip Heath
Publisher: Random House
Price: $32

In this book, the Heath's examine the concept of changing strategy when one is already successful.

Craig Lund, a director with the staffing firm Marketers on Demand, can be reached at craig.lund@marketersondemand.com

In Canada, even firings and layoffs are polite

JON TATTRIE
for Metro Canada

In the new movie Up in the Air, George Clooney plays a flying executioner patrolling the skies above America's unravelling economy, touching down only to drop the ax on the luckless casualties of the crisis.

Gary Agnew is Canada's answer to Clooney's American horseman of the economic apocalypse, but the veteran of the downsizing industry says such brutishness would never fly in Canada. Where U.S. firms may hire hitmen like Clooney to pull the trigger, Canadian bosses find the courage to do it themselves — with help.

"The movie has got a U.S. slant to it and is an exaggerated portrait," says Agnew, a partner at the Calgary-based human-resources company Cenera. "We don't go in and fire people. We train managers in how to do it humanely."

Laying someone off is never easy, but there are people and companies out there that make it easier.

After the layoffs, Cenera helps former staff regroup. "I've been doing this for 30 years. Let me tell you: 95 per cent of the people I have worked with have gone to positions that are far better than the positions they were in," Agnew says.

That's what gives him his cheery disposition: He loves helping people turn a career crisis into a career-advancing pivot. But it's not easy. "I think most of my colleagues carry a fairly heavy bag full of emotions because we feel the pain people have been through," he admits.

Genevieve Belben heads up DBM's Atlantic Region and has overseen countless downsizing operations. Local branches of the global career management company handle small-scale layoffs, but Belben flies in when an East Coast company is closing, meaning she doesn't quite share the itinerant life of Clooney's character.

"We don't go in and fire people. We train managers in how to do it humanely."
Cenera's Gary Agnew

Like Agnew, she rarely participates in the actual terminations. "We're the future focus. We don't want to be tied to the bad news," she says from her Halifax office. "We're retained by a corporation … but we work for the employee."

But no matter how many times she's been through it, D-day is always a bad day. But still, "change is not a bad thing — change spells opportunity," she says.

WorkplaceLaw

Daniel Lublin

Metronews.ca/workplacelaw

Employees can make mistakes too

COLUMN Employees are often the author of their own misfortune. Despite my cautionary writings, they routinely sign contracts replete with unfavourable terms. By doing so, they unknowingly agree to be eliminated with minimum notice, demoted, or banished to far away jurisdictions, see their salary slashed and prevented from competing with their employer following their departure — all with legal impunity. But, here is one (among many) example where to the contrary.

Once an employee begins work, it is often too late to have him or her sign an agreement, even if on the first day. After a series of interviews, the CIBC extended Trusty Francis an offer of employment. However, on his first day at work he was presented with a number of forms and agreements that attempted to limit his entitlement to three months' salary if he was fired. At trial, the court found that Francis's employment contract was consummated when he agreed to the first offer of employment and, because nothing of new value was given to him when he showed up at work, the forms and agreements he was told to sign were unenforceable. Otherwise, the court reasoned, an employer could unilaterally impose new terms of employment at any time and an employee would be without leverage to negotiate.

I have prevailed in court by raising the inference that a contract was signed without proper consent. Don't be reluctant to negotiate terms and have any contract reviewed by a lawyer before signing your name.

SEE METRONEWS.CA/WORKPLACELAW TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE.

Daniel A. Lublin is an employment lawyer with Whitten & Lublin LLP. Reach him at dan@toronto-employmentlawyer.com.

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Shop, and hire, until you drop

MAT LECOMPTE
for Metro Canada

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY The holidays are right around the corner, and along with the reunions, good times and parties, it means one more thing; something that can be best summed-up in the first five words of a classic 1973 O'Jays tune: For the love of Money.

Last year a Scotiabank survey estimated that Canadians would spend an average of $790 on various holiday expenses.

A lot of that cash will be spent in big-box retailers like Future Shop and Best Buy — who are/will be making a combined total of 8,000 hires for the holiday season, stretching from now until the new year. Hires will be offered the same wage as existing employees and also receive full employee discounts for their term — helping to ease the financial burden of the season.

Big-box stores will be busy even after the Christmas rush.

Chris Taylor, head of human resources for Future Shop, says the stores are looking to increase their in-store staff by 40-50 per cent for the month of December. Hires will vary by market and store, so he says interested individuals should inquire at the locations nearest to them.

Taylor, along with Danielle Jang of Best Buy, is anticipating a successful season even though the economy has been in a slump. With great deals on a wide variety of items, they expect the seasonal hires to be quite busy throughout the season. This is especially good for Future Shop sales associates who are able to earn commission.

So what kind of discounts can seasonal hires expect? According to Taylor, it varies on the product. For example, items like laptop computers that are sold at a relatively small margin, will not provide the opportunity for huge savings. Items such as television sets, accessories and other items sold at wider margins, however, will offer staff to take advantage of some great savings opportunities.

Every little bit helps around this time.

Warning issued for child seat car carriers
A product advisory notice has been issued in Canada for certain Dorel infant car seats, which may pose a potential safety hazard due to a handle that may loosen and come off when the seat is used as an infant carrier. CANADIANDRIVER.COM

Metro Drive

Saab sale fails
Saab Automobile AB will be closed down, following an announcement by General Motors that its sale to Spyker Cars could not be completed.
CANADIANDRIVER.COM

EDITOR: KUMAR SAHA, KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

Nissan Leaf fun, agile ride

MICHAEL GOETZ
for Metro Canada

You only have one chance to make a first impression.

Show up for a job interview, for a coveted position in the poultry industry, with untrimmed nose hair and a "Meat is Murder" t-shirt, and well, your goose will be cooked, so to speak.

The ramifications of an unsatisfactory first impression weren't lost on the brain trust at Nissan.

That first drive, that first ownership experience with all-electric Nissan Leaf, has to be completely satisfactory, or the chances of moving electric vehicles to the mainstream will be stopped in its tracks, says Ian Forsythe, a product specialist at Nissan Canada.

So we have an all-electric vehicle that aims to look and drive pretty close to how consumers would expect a five-passenger, front-drive family sedan to look and drive (with one major exception, which we'll get to shortly).

I had a chance to check if Nissan managed its objective, via a brief fling in a Leaf prototype in a parking lot in Vancouver. Yes, a pylon course. I took two laps, for a combined seat time of about one minute and 37 seconds. Not quite like a lap around the famed Nurburgring, but enough to confirm that Leaf is fun to drive and will not unnerve anybody. It handles very much like every other front-drive sedan — agile, but with just the right amount of dialed-in understeer to make the vehicle predictable and safe.

It's even hard to detect its regenerative braking system. Other electric vehicles and hybrids have more aggressive regenerative systems, which means they essentially "brake" the vehicle anytime you're off the "gas," to convert every little bit of kinetic energy to electricity. The Leaf coasts more like a conventional car.

The prototype we drove had Versa bodywork over its Leaf electric platform. A full-blown Leaf was available for viewing, and you can see that, while it is different, it's not scary different. It doesn't need a front radiator grille or a tailpipe, so it has neither. The plug-in "socket" is behind a flap on its front hood, which is short and low for aerodynamic purposes.

The one electric motor is fitted up front, but very low in the body, as are the batteries. Other EVs and hybrids use cylinder-shaped batteries, but the lithium-ion battery pack in the Leaf is formed in thin, laminated sheets. This keeps the batteries cool, which is so necessary for longevity and reliability.

But back to our parking lot run… The one defining characteristic of all electric vehicles is "instantaneous" torque. Depress the "gas" pedal, or whatever you want to call it, and the Leaf shoots forward like it was suddenly hitched to a moving transport truck. And Nissan even dialed a bit off the experience, to make it less surprising, and more like something we're used to…

So maybe you want one? Well you can't have one. At least not until the early fall of 2011.

Why the wait? It's back to that first impression thing. Nissan and other EV makers need infrastructure to develop in some Canadian cities, so owners actually have places to recharge their vehicles, other than at their homes. Any other way, and EVs will blow their first, good shot at stardom and it's back to dinner theatre.

The 2011 Nissan Leaf needs infrastructure to develop in some Canadian cities, so owners actually have places to recharge their vehicles, other than at their homes.

Above, the plug-in outlet for the 2011 Nissan Leaf, positioned short and low. Right, the interior of the car,

2010 Nissan Leaf

Type: 5-door hatchback
Powertrain: 80 kilowatt AC electric motor, laminated lithium-ion battery pack (the equivalent of about 106 hp and 207 lb-ft of torque)
Charging times: About 8 hours on 220-volt current
Range: 160 km per full charge
Top Speed: Over 140 km/h

Highlights

- Zero Emissions
- Not available until late 2011
- Vancouver gets first Canadian units

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GM begins loan repayments

General Motors has begun loan repayments to the U.S., Canadian and Ontario governments, with an initial payment of $1.0 billion US to the U.S. Treasury, and $192 million to Export Development Canada. CANADIANDRIVER.COM

Best cars of the decade... for now

AutoPilot

Michael Goetz

metronews.ca/autopilot

The Honda Civic was far and away Canada's best selling car of the decade, and for good reason.

This decade is just about toast. So time for another list — the top ten vehicles of the decade. I wish I had a definitive one to offer you.

Every time I examined the contenders on my list, I would kick some out, and pull others in. It was, and is, in constant flux — like a four-year old on a Count Chocula high.

So consider the following only my "current for the moment" nominations for vehicles with impact and/or panache, that were born between 2000 and 2009…

The third-generation **Toyota Prius** (2004-2009) was the one that cemented it as the hybrid poster boy. The two previous generations had little impact, but this one debuted an iconic profile, pushed hybrids into the public consciousness, and eventually proved that hybrids could stand up to long years of use (and abuse).

The first-generation **Nissan Murano** (2002-2007) was not the first crossover, but definitely the most attractive and appealing one so far produced. It demonstrated a new and very successful mainstream and classy direction for crossovers — and one that had nothing to do with mud. Net result: unibody crossovers rule, body-on-frame SUVs drool.

The **Bugatti Veyron** (2005-2008) was built to impress: 8.0-litre,16-cylinder engine, 1,001 horsepower, and a top speed of 407.9 km/h. It is beyond desirable and virtually unobtainable. It also has a decent stereo, and looks pretty good in blue..

This decade was just another one when **Honda Civic** rocked the house. It is far and away Canada's best selling car of the decade, and for good reason.

Same thing for the **Ford F-150** — it is easily the top selling truck nameplate of the decade, and continues to stay in front of a very determined group of competitors. This Ford also pioneered the concept that truck interiors, particularly crew cabs, need not be stark places with rock-hard seats and no amenities.

The next two cars on our list — the re-born **Ford Thunderbird** and **Mini** — both pushed the notion that "retro" styling has great appeal and can be done effectively in a modern way. The Mini also proved that buyers are willing to pay a premium for "small," if it's the right kind of "small."

The **2008 Chevrolet Malibu** lead a pack of domestic-built sedans that could legitimately take back the midsize market, which GM, Ford and Chrysler seemed to abdicate to the imports in the previous decades. Based on an Opel platform, Malibu is also a good example of why global design and engineering is now the only way to go..

The **2004 Cadillac CTS** rejuventated Cadillac in a profound way, and is one of the few bold designs to spring from the decade. A new-generation CTS launched in 2009, and its high-output "V" series utilizes a version of the Corvette ZR1 V8, making it one of the fastest sports sedans on the planet.

Michael Goetz has been writing about cars and editing automotive publications for over 20 years. He lives in Toronto with his family and a neglected 1967 Jaguar E-type.

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Chef keeps trucking with his Titan

MyDrive

Heather Buchan

metronews.ca/mydrive

Executive chef and father of two Trevor Wilkinson declares his love for his 2004 Nissan Titan.

As the executive chef of the recently opened Roosevelt Room — one of Toronto's latest hot spots — that harkens back to a bygone era of the supper club, Trevor Wilkinson leads a team of 10 in the busy kitchen. "I'm thrilled," he says of his latest venture that follows the opening of his own restaurant, Trevor Kitchen and Bar. .

A confessed "truck guy," the father of two drives a 2004 Nissan Titan, which he fell in love with after seeing it in a commercial. "I was driving a Chevy, but I was looking for a full-size truck. I test drove the Titan and fell in love with it," he explains.

Aside from the ample space it his truck provides, the heated leather seats and it's "amazing sound system," Wilkinson loves having four-wheel drive. "I don't know how people do without it," he says. "I'm pretty handy, so I can carry all my tools and equipment around in it, pack up snowboards, all the kids stuff. It's great." He also

Wilkinson, who has worked his way through many of Toronto's top kitchens, including Jump, under Michael Bonacini and Canoe, under Marc McEwan, was first inspired to work in a kitchen after his parents took him for his 24th birthday dinner at Lotus, Susur Lee's first restaurant. "It was about 15 years ago, but seeing was he was doing, I was just so inspired," recalls Wilkinson.

Despite long workdays that generally end around midnight, Wilkinson says he wouldn't want to be a nine-to-fiver.

"I still just love food. You know, it's always new," he says. In his free time, weather permitting, he takes his motorcycle out for a spin. "I've had my motorcycle license since I was 18. I was driving motorcycles in high school before I had my license," he says, adding that fatherhood has mellowed him out a bit. "I've had multiple accidents, tickets, that sort of thing … I'd probably categorize myself as an aggressive driver, but since having kids I've changed my driving habits," he says.

As for the future, he says: "Hopefully I'll be working a little bit less and spending more time with my kids. Or, running my restaurant from a cell phone and laptop on a yacht in the Caribbean."

Heather Buchan is a Toronto-based journalist who has worked at Homemakers, Canadian Living, Canadian House & Home and, most recently, Hello! Canada, where she cut her teeth in the world of celebrities.

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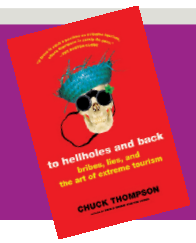
Retailer may sell for less. †The Nissan Altima received the lowest number of problems per 100 vehicles among midsize cars in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2009 U.S. Initial Quality Study℠. Study based on responses from 80,930 U.S. new-vehicle owners, measuring 245 models and measures opinions after 90 days of ownership. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of owners surveyed in February-May 2009. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com. ‡The 2010 Rogue is winner of a Consumers Digest Best Buy Award. The Best Buy Seal is a registered trademark of Consumers Digest Communications, LLC, used under license. ²The 2009 Rogue is winner of ALG Residual Value Award - CUV Segment. ‡Government star ratings are part of the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) New Car Assessment Program (www.safercar.gov). U.S. model tested. Please see www.safercar.gov for up to date information. ▪For a limited time receive up to $1,000 Grad discount available on select models when leasing or financing a new 2009 or 2010 Nissan. See retailer for complete Grad program details.

ZAGAT RATED

Going to the Games?

Just in time for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, Zagat has released an updated guide to Vancouver, with recommendations for restaurants and attractions in the city as well as for the ski resort town of Whistler and for beautiful Vancouver Island. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Travel



Going to hellholes in a hand basket

Author Chuck Thompson sets out to discover if some of the world's most ill-reputed travel destinations live up to their bad raps. Whether he's diving head long into an Indian monsoon or traveling across the Congo in the company of a notorious dictator's bodyguard, To Hellholes and Back delivers Thompson's trademark combination of hilarious stories and wildly provocative opinions, as well as some surprising observations about America's evolving place in the world. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: BEN.RYCROFT@METRONEWS.CA

Getting peace of mind

Le Sport resort promises to inspire and rejuvenate its patrons

ANNE DIMON
for Metro Canada

ANNE DIMON/FOR METRO CANADA

The secluded resort offers various levels of yoga, meditation and stretching classes.

ANNE DIMON/FOR METRO CANADA

Le Sport offers introduction to fencing courses.

The tag line reads: "Give us your body for a week, and we will give you back your mind." But what I'm wondering as I arrive for my two-night stay and am welcomed by a boisterous chorus of crickets is if I'm here for just two days, do they give me back a piece of my mind?

Located on the extreme northern side of the island of St. Lucia about a 20-minute drive from the capital of Castries, and about an hour away from the famous Piton volcanic peaks, Le Sport opened in the mid-'80s with health and wellness front and centre. Back then the concept of taking a holiday to launch a healthier lifestyle had not yet gone main stream.

Clearly, the all-inclusive Le Sport was a resort ahead of its time.

In addition to the expected beach resort activities — kayaking, sailing, scuba, for instance — are those that keep many guests returning for an annual retreat. Daily back-to-back activities begin as early as 7 a.m. with a bicycle tour to nearby Pigeon Island or a guided hike, perhaps up to Mount Du Cap for a bird's eye view of the beach. There are various levels of yoga, meditation, spinning and stretching classes, Tai Chi, introductions to fencing and martial arts ... the list goes on and on and on.

Guests are invited to do as much or as little as they want. Nothing is forced but there are a few not so subtle encouragements here and there. For instance, there are no TV sets in any of the resort's 154 guest rooms. "We want guests out of their rooms enjoying the many activities and getting in touch with self and (if travelling as a couple) their partner," says brand manager Judy Deterville.

45 The number of therapists who work at Le Sport. They feature wellness practitioners brought in from different parts of the globe including those that specialize in Reiki, Balinese therapies, Ayurveda, acupuncture, nutrition/iridology and hypno and psycho therapies

ANNE DIMON/FOR METRO CANADA

Watersports, such as kayaking and sailing, are popular choices.

There are also "eating healthy" reminders on the menus and select dishes are starred for things such as low fat and low sodium. While each of the four restaurants offers healthy choices, the selections are mixed in with holiday choices. So, if you want a burger and fries after a long lazy day of lounging under a beach umbrella — no one's there to lay a guilt trip. The heart of The Body Holiday at Le Sport is The Oasis. I'd say it's one of the largest and most comprehensive spas in the Caribbean, but health and wellness leader, Matthew Powell says they don't like to use the term spa. "We're so much more than that," he says. "Wellness Centre is more accurate."

Health and Wellness retreat

In addition to the wide range of programs, one of the main points of distinction of this beachfront all-inclusive is that spa treatments are included. Guests are entitled to one spa treatment a day as part of the package. There are seven treatments to select from including 50-minute scrubs, facials and massages — like the full-body one I tired at the skilled hands of Heidi; one of about 45 therapists who work here. Spa manager Dr. Abhishek (a doctor of Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy) says about half a dozen staff members are wellness practitioners brought in from different parts of the globe including those that specialize in Reiki, Balinese therapies, Ayurveda, acupuncture, nutrition/iridology and hypno and psycho therapies. In addition to spa treatments and wellness therapies there are also customized programs such as smoking cessation, sleeping restoration and cellulite flush. The doctor stresses this is not a restrictive place — no boot camp philosophy — but a place to make subtle but significant changes that can be taken home and implemented into everyday life. Peace of mind is an added bonus.

Anne Dimon is a spa and wellness travel writer and editor of traveltowellness.com

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Get a taste of Michigan
Michigan is launching an effort to promote culinary tourism and encourage local offerings on restaurant menus. Cherries, wine, and apple cider are some of the products the state is already known for. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Embrace Canada's cold-weather sport

Dog-sled race organizers looking to bring out big crowds for longest race

Most people think hockey when it comes to winter spectator sports — not a 520-km trek through northern Saskatchewan.

But organizers with the Canadian Challenge are hoping cold-loving Canadians will consider sitting out in the wilderness, instead of at the rink, to watch some of the fastest sled dogs whiz by in a bid to win the country's longest dog derby.

"It's a spectator sport with a difference," says Gill Gracie, president of the Canadian Challenge sled dog race.

"You have to be willing to stay up late because it runs 24 hours. We're trying to encourage people actually this year to follow the dogs along."

The Canadian Challenge is actually four sled dog races that start Feb. 10 in Prince Albert, Sask.

Gracie says they put snow on Central Ave. in Prince Albert for the ceremonial start and the dog teams take off across the North Saskatchewan River, heading north. A team leaves every two minutes.

The flagship race is the 12-dog race. Over the course of four days, it runs roughly 520 km from Prince Albert up to La Ronge, north to a little place called Grandmother's Bay and over to Stanley Mission before heading back to La Ronge where the finish line is located.

The race started in 1998 when some mushers in Prince Albert wanted to promote the support of sled dog racing.

It's grown to become the longest sled dog race that starts, runs and finishes in Canada. It's also a qualifying race for the Iditarod and the Yukon Quest.

The race follows a route similar to that of the old sled dog trail used for years by trappers, the North West Mounted Police and First Nations community to travel between Prince Albert and La Ronge.

Most people don't get up to the north but there's a lot to do, says Gracie, who lives in La Ronge. There's snowmobiling, ice fishing and "awesome" cross-country skiing, she says.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

JOSHUA PAGE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Organizers with the Canadian Challenge are hoping cold-loving Canadians will consider sitting out in the wilderness, instead of at the rink, to watch some of the fastest sled dogs whiz by in a bid to win the country's longest dog derby

One dogs gets a little excited.

If you go...

- The race starts Feb. 10 at noon in Prince Albert and ends the morning of Feb. 14 in La Ronge. canadianchallenge.com

Travel in brief

TOP 10 IN 2010 If you're looking for inspiration for a trip in the new year, Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2010 offers trends, destinations and experiences around the world. Top 10 cities for next year, according to Lonely Planet, are Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Charleston, S.C.; Cork, Ireland; Cuenca, Ecuador; Istanbul, Turkey; Kyoto, Japan; Lecce, Italy; Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Singapore and Vancouver.

RESORT RE-OPENS A popular luxury Florida Keys resort has reopened almost a year after its primary building was ravaged by a New Year's Eve fire. Guests began checking into the 11-hectare Cheeca Lodge Resort&Spa this month as workers completed finishing touches on a new main lodge.

SKIING Sleeping Giant Ski Area in northern Wyoming is opening to skiers for the first time since 2004. The ski area's operators originally had hoped to open as early as Thanksgiving weekend, but their plans were foiled by insufficient snow. Sleeping Giant Ski Area calls itself one of America's oldest ski areas, having originally opened in the late 1930s.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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YONGE & EGLINTON

Sesame Street actor dies of cancer

Alaina Reed Hall, who portrayed Olivia Robinson on Sesame Street for 12 years, has died. Reed Hall was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007 and succumbed Thursday at a Santa Monica, Calif., hospital, her husband, Tamim Amini, told the Los Angeles Times. TVGUIDE.COM

Entertainment

Setting records

Miley Cyrus has broken the record for the largest ever attendance at London's O2 Arena. She played to 16,196 fans during the third of five sold-out concerts at the venue this month. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

EDITOR: DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Trends that defined the decade

iPods, tattoos and reality TV among the things that changed our lives

Was it only a decade ago that a blackberry was a mere summer fruit? That green was, well, a colour, and reality TV was that one show sandwiched between music videos on MTV?

There were, of course, huge political and social upheavals that roiled our world in the past decade. But there were also the gradual lifestyle changes that you don't always notice — kind of like watching a child grow older. Here's a look at some things that changed our lives:

APPS: There's an app for that! The phrase comes from Apple iPhone advertising, but could apply to the entire decade's gadget explosion, from laptops to GPS systems.

BLOG: I blog, you blog, he blogs ... How did we spend our time before blogging? There are more than 100 million of these web logs out there in cyberspace.

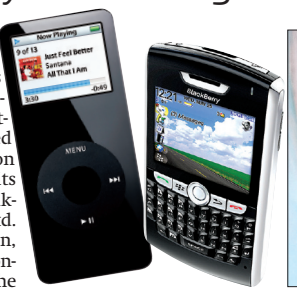
BLACKBERRIES: Considered essential by corporate CEOs and moms planning playdates. Introduced in 2002, the smartphone version is now used by more than 28 million people, according to its Waterloo, Ont.-based maker, Research In Motion Ltd.

CONNECTIVITY: As in, we're all expected to be connected, wirelessly, all the time. Boss emails you on a Sunday? Better answer, unless you're off in Antarctica — you have no excuse.

COUGARS: A new TV series called Cougar Town focuses on a phenomenon that gained its name this decade: women dating younger men.

CROCS: Those ubiquitous plastic clogs debuted in 2002 and became the shoes you loved to hate. Kids love 'em, but there are web groups dedicated to their destruction.

FACEBOOK: Can you believe this social networking site was once limited only to Harvard students? Now it's a time-sucking obsession for more than 300 million users globally.



The iPod, left, the Blackberry, centre, and Twitter (co-founder Evan Williams, right) defined the decade.

FOODIE: It's not just that guy in the White House who liked arugula — this was the decade of the foodie, when we all developed gourmet palates. Even a burgers went gourmet.

GOOGLE: This was the decade that Google became a part of our brain function. You know that guy who was in that movie — when was it? Just Google it.

IPODS: An icon of the digital age, it's hard to believe this portable media player was first launched in 2001. Six years later the 100 millionth iPod was sold.

REALITY TV: As a nation, we became addicted to reality TV, from the feuding Gosselins of Jon&Kate Plus 8 to American Idol to Project Runway. At decade's end, the Heenes of Balloon Boy fame and the Salahis of gatecrashing fame give reality TV some unwanted attention.

TATTOOS: It started innocently enough — maybe a butterfly on the shoulder or a tribal symbol on the bicep. A few characters from the Chinese alphabet later it seemed any hipster who really meant it had a full sleeve of tattoos. The trend extended to middle-aged moms and even tween idol Miley Cyrus.

TEXTING: R u still rding this sty? Hope u r. This is the decade we start communicating in the shorthand of text messages. Get used to it: Email is so '00s.

TWITTER: The new social network introduced tweets, retweets, follows and trending topics — as long as it fit in 140 characters.

WII: In a sea of video games, this simple console became the decade's breakout hit by appealing to the non-gaming masses. Wiis became a centre of family gaming, home fitness and even senior socializing.

WIKIPEDIA: A boon to lazy students everywhere, the open-source encyclopedia used the masses to police its entries and keep them accurate.

YOUTUBE: The video-sharing site was born in 2005. Political candidates in 2008 even had their on channels.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Does Jesus really matter any more?

Christmas is about shopping, presents, family and feasting, right?

Archbishop Colin R. Johnson
Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

In our frenetic world, it's easy to forget that Christmas marks the birth of a child some 2,000 years ago. His name was — is — Jesus. Christians believe he is the Son of God.

Our time is not so different from the one Jesus was born into. We suffer from worries and concerns, broken relationships, wars and famines. The very things that kept our ancestors awake all those years ago keep us awake still.

God came to us then — and does now — in the person of Jesus. God comes because he loves us. Unconditionally. He comes because he wants to be in relationship with us — a relationship that is life-giving, that brings hope and healing, that is life-fulfilling.

In a society scarred by fear, injustice and homelessness, it can be difficult to see God's love for us. But it's there — in the generosity of those engaged in service to others, in efforts to reconcile personal relationships and global conflicts, in both the awesome beauty of the created order itself and the simplicity of a baby's smile. A thoughtful word, a listening ear, an act of caring — in these and so many other ways, we catch a glimpse of the divine. And there is more...

On that first Christmas, the angel told the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

This Christmas, you can connect with God through Jesus.

It can begin with a simple prayer: "God, show yourself to me this Christmas." You can start by reaching out to someone who is sick, afraid, lonely, homeless or hungry, just as Jesus did — and does.

And you can connect with God by joining others at church. This Christmas, I invite you to your local Anglican church.

Jesus (and his family) will be there to welcome you.

To find an Anglican church near you, visit

www.toronto.anglican.ca

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO/JOEL RYAN

Guy Ritchie directed Sherlock Holmes, opening Christmas Day.

Ritchie comes out swinging in Sherlock

Guy Ritchie puts his faith in hard work and 'Sherlock Holmes'

All in all, Guy Ritchie has had a pretty good 2009.

He had a blast making his big-budget thriller Sherlock Holmes, stayed focused on his work — and avoided coverage of the fallout from his split with Madonna.

"I haven't read the papers for so long now," said Ritchie. "I don't watch TV.

"Head down, arms swinging — I've been like that for a couple of years now."

The British filmmaker and the queen of pop divorced in November 2008, eight years after they wed in a Scottish castle and became darlings of the tabloid press.

Fortunately, Ritchie, 41, had plenty to distract him from the inevitable media frenzy. He spent the year finishing 'Holmes,' which stars Robert Downey Jr. as the Victorian sleuth and Jude Law as trusty sidekick Dr. Watson. The film opens around the world this week.

Ritchie said he enjoyed making the film "more than anything I've worked on before" — largely due to the presence of Law and Downey. The three are now firm friends

"They are very creative," Ritchie said. "I always felt whilst we were making it that we were making something that was a collaboration, a collection of creative ideas."

Sherlock Holmes gave Ritchie his biggest budget to date — a reported $80 million — after smaller-scale Brit gangster flicks like Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, Snatch and RocknRolla.

Ritchie, a fan of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories since childhood, said "it seemed like a natural progression to go from what I'd done previously to something that was iconic and English but at the same time had the deep pockets of Hollywood."

If the film fares well, sequels are in the offing — and that would make Ritchie very happy.

"Work comes first. It's primary, not secondary," he said.

"Making films is like a fantasy, and the older I get the more of a fantasy it seems to become. So I feel very lucky to be part of something like this."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sherlock Holmes opens Friday

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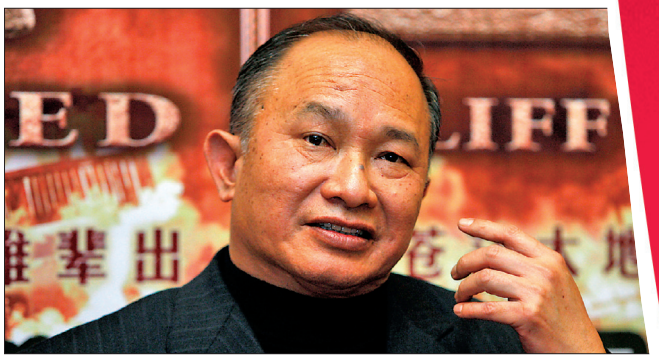

John Woohas been honoured by the Venice Film Festival for his work in movies.

Woo wins lifetime achievement award

Organizers of the Venice Film Festival have honoured John Woo with its lifetime achievement award, saying the veteran director transformed action movies both in his native Hong Kong and his current professional home of Hollywood.

Calling the 61-year-old filmmaker "an innovator of the contemporary language of cinema," festival organizers said in a statement posted on their official Web site Monday that they decided to award Woo the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement.

"The acknowledgment recognizes a filmmaker who in recent decades, with his revolutionary conception of staging and editing, has renewed action movies to the core, introducing an extreme stylization close to visual art, both in Asia and in Hollywood," organizers said.

"This is a surprise to me. I'm excited. I'm very grateful," Woo told The Associated Press in a phone interview from the eastern Chinese city Hengdian, where he is producing a new kung fu movie starring former Bond girl Michelle Yeoh.

"I feel very gratified that I can communicate with many people around the world and make many friends through movies," he said.

Woo made his name in Hong Kong with stylish action films like A Better Tomorrow, The Killer and Hard Boiled before moving on to the U.S., where his credits include Broken Arrow, Face/Off and Mission: Impossible II.

Woo recently returned to China to make the two-part historical epic Red Cliff. His next project is a movie about the so-called Flying Tigers — American fighter pilots who defended China against Japanese invaders during the Second World War.

"In his war and gangster film masterpieces, Woo has been capable of transfiguring hyperbolic motion and exasperated violence with a highly original poetic and romantic infusion, sustained by an extremely personal and energetic figurative tension, similar to a surreal hallucination," organizers said.

The award will be presented at the 67th Venice Film Festival, which will be held from Sept. 1 to Sept. 11, 2010.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Christmas Story sleepover for reality star

CHRISTMAS WISH A reality TV star gets to spend a couple of nights living like Ralphie in the house used for the movie A Christmas Story.

The experience is a "major award" for Billy Jeffrey, who says he's obsessed with the 1983 film. He bid $4,200 US in an online charity auction and was scheduled to make his sleepovers Monday and Tuesday nights.

The house in Cleveland's Tremont neighbourhood is now a tourist attraction.

The Christmas cult classic film stars Peter Billingsley as Ralphie Parker, a young boy determined to get a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas.

High bidder Jeffrey was a cast member on the ABC reality TV series True Beauty last winter and has toured as a Chippendales exotic dancer. He said Monday it was his first visit to Cleveland.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SAME-DAY RELEASE – DEC. 22

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Grammy performances

Taylor Swift and Beyonce will perform at the Grammy Awards next month. The Recording Academy said Tuesday that other performers will include the Black Eyed Peas, Lady Antebellum and Maxwell. Swift has eight nominations. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Top 10 films of '09

The year's Top 10 films as selected by the writers and editors of The Canadian Press. In alphabetical order, the films are:

1. AN EDUCATION Newcomer Carey Mulligan sparkles in this smart, stylish tale of a London schoolgirl seduced by a mysterious older man (Peter Sarsgaard). Danish director Lone Scherfig, working from a screenplay by novelist Nick Hornby, paints an intoxicating portrait of London on the cusp of the swinging '60s.

2. AVATAR James Cameron delivers on a bold vision that pushes special effects — and his budget — to unprecedented levels. He beautifully paints an otherworldly landscape of planet Pandora where viewers can imagine fantastical creatures (the Na'vi) exist. Cameron not only convinces viewers to believe in the Na'vi, he also urges the audience to root for them, even at the expense of the human race.

3. BAD LIEUTENANT: PORT OF CALL NEW ORLEANS One of the most delightfully outlandish films of the year returns big-budget action star Nicolas Cage to his offbeat, comic roots in this surreal and ludicrous crime story, set in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

4. BRIGHT STAR Like the poetry of its protagonist, John Keats, this Jane Campion-directed story is a sensuous treat. Keats and fashion student Fanny Brawne (Abbie Cornish) are falling in love, to be sure, but Campion doesn't hit us over the head with it. Give in to the film's subtleties and you'll find yourself enraptured with their suggestive glances across the room and forbidden touches of the hand.

5. THE HURT LOCKER Director Kathryn Bigelow illustrates a penetrating, unvarnished look at the painstaking efforts that go into discovering and defusing bombs in Iraq, and the psychological effects on the explosives teams. In what feels more like a documentary than a scripted film, the dusty desert scenes are often played out in real time and with striking veracity.

Ben Whishaw and Abbie Cornish shine in Bright Star.

Worth noting

- Honourable mentions are: Adventureland, Two Lovers, A Single Man and Inglourious Basterds.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

6. I KILLED MY MOTHER Drawn from Quebec phenom Xavier Dolan's own experiences, this semi-autobiographical tale is all the more remarkable because its writer, director, producer and star was just 19 when the film was made. The story centres on 16-year-old Hubert Minel and the explosive fury that erupts from his intense relationship with single mom. At times hilarious, poignant, painful and always raw, the film excels in its portrayal of familial bickering.

7. POLYTECHNIQUE A dreamlike melancholy pervades this black-and-white account of the murderous rampage at Ecole Polytechnique on Dec. 6, 1989. There's little dialogue, a stark realism and an impassive tone to disturbing re-enactments that manage to shock but not sensationalize.

8. THE TROTSKY Jay Baruchel puts in a star-making turn as a 17-year-old Montreal firebrand who believes he's the reincarnation of Leon Trotsky. It's a premise that could have easily spiralled into quirky-indie-film purgatory, but the gimmicky logline doesn't do this inventive, hilarious and uplifting comedy justice.

9. UP This film follows Carl (voiced by Ed Asner), a prickly, isolated 78-year-old who decides to make good on a promise he made to his late wife to travel to South America, unwittingly dragging a portly, sweet-natured boy scout along for the ride. A stunning, wordless montage of Carl's life with his partner, Ellie, opens the film and mashes the audience's heartstrings like Pete Townshend whirling around on a Gibson SG.

10. UP IN THE AIR If you haven't yet made it out to the theatre to see this one, consider yourself lucky — one of the year's richest, most satisfying cinematic experiences awaits you. Director Jason Reitman has come of age with this funny, melancholic, bittersweet look at frequent flyer Ryan Bingham (George Clooney).

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rage campaign ends Cowell's chart reign

Facebook group unseats mogul's hold on Christmas No.1 spot

A grassroots Facebook campaign has spoiled American Idol mogul Simon Cowell's Christmas by denying one of his new acts the prestigious Christmas No. 1 spot in Britain.

Thanks to a Facebook campaign that capitalized on growing unhappiness with Cowell's cookie-cutter approach to pop stardom, the anti-establishment Rage Against the Machine came out ahead of Joe McElderry, winner of Cowell's popular X Factor TV competition.

The upset for the heavily favoured McElderry represents a setback for Cowell, who has made millions on both sides of the Atlantic for his roles in American Idol, X Factor, Britain's Got Talent and other productions.

Rage Against the Machine finished first with a surge of support for their 1992 hit Killing in the Name, which became the first Christmas No. 1 in Britain supported only by downloads.

McElderry, a talented, baby-faced singer who is just 18, was gracious in defeat. He emphasized his satisfaction at winning last week's X Factor finals, which shot him from obscurity to national prominence.

"Fair play to the guys who have organized the Facebook campaign — it's been exciting to be part of a much-hyped battle and they definitely deserve congratulations," he said.

McElderry said he was "delighted" to have his debut single — The Climb — in the charts. The CD is prominently displayed in hundreds of British shops.

"It's been such an incredible couple of months, and I got the best Christmas gift I could ever have asked for in winning The X Factor," he said.

L.A.-based Rage Against The Machine topped the UK Christmas charts this year thanks to an aggressive Facebook campaign.

"I got the best Christmas gift I could ever have asked for in winning The X Factor."
The X Factor winner Joe McElderry

Killing In The Name surged in the last days of the competition to sell more than 500,000 copies in the past week, compared with sales of 450,000 for McElderry's single. It also set a record for most downloads in a single week.

The Facebook campaign was organized by an English couple Jon and Tracy Morter in a concerted effort to break Cowell's recent stranglehold on the holiday No. 1 song, a traditional source of status and bragging rights inside Britain.

They attracted nearly 1 million followers on Facebook on behalf of Rage Against the Machine.

Rage Against the Machine singer Zack de la Rocha said the band was "very ecstatic and excited" about topping the Christmas charts. He told BBC radio the band's success was due to the support of young people throughout Britain rebelling against the ready-made pop star approach.

"It says more about the spontaneous action taken by young people throughout the U.K. to topple this very sterile pop monopoly and less about the song and the band," he said. "We are very proud to have had the song chosen as the vehicle by which to do this."

The list of past Christmas No. 1 winners includes the Spice Girls, the Beatles, Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley and perennial British favourite Cliff Richard, who triumphed with The Shadows in 1960 and again as a solo act in 1988. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Entertainment in brief

INVESTIGATION Newly released documents show the FBI assisted local authorities in the U.S. and in Britain as they investigated Michael Jackson for child molestation. According to documents released Tuesday through a Freedom of Information Act request from The Associated Press and other media, the FBI assisted local authorities on several occasions between the years 1993 and 2005. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Cameron plans Avatar sequels

James Cameron plans to make two further installments to the Avatar franchise. The award-winning filmmaker plans to turn the alien love story into a trilogy, but hasn't started work yet. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

Chipmunks sequel lacks soul, story

Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Squeakquel picks up where the original movie left off.

Alvin & The Chipmunks: **The Squeakquel**

Director: Betty Thomas
Stars: Zachary Levi
Classification: G
Rating: 1½

On the web

- For an Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Squeakquel trailer, photos and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

REVIEW When Alvin and the Chipmunks took in over $350 million US at the global box office in 2007, the long-time radio gimmick-turned-Saturday morning cartoon-turned big screen blockbuster was pretty much guaranteed a sequel.

Instead, we got The Squeakquel. And if you find that kind of nauseatingly cute wordplay annoying, wait until you sit through the soulless money-grab that is The Squeakquel.

Picking up pretty much where the first movie left off, The Squeakquel sees the computer-animated pop-star rodents's adopted guardian (Jason Lee) quickly hospitalized after an on-stage accident.

This leaves the Chipmunks in the incapable hands of cousin Toby (Zachary Levi of TV's Chuck), an expendable videogame-obsessed character with all the charm and intellect of a boiled potato.

Sent back to school, the Chipmunks soon face an assortment of stereotypical circumstances (bullying, cliques, etc). But most noteworthy is the introduction of the Chipettes — a triad of female chipmunks that share their counterparts' talent for singing high-pitched pop music.

I suppose they're intended to be adorable but there's something slightly troubling about seeing scantily-clad cartoon characters mimic the booty-shaking moves of Beyoncé's Single Ladies. What's next for toddlers' entertainment? Minnie Mouse krumping to My Humps?

What this film is really missing though is a story: Merely spinning the gimmick of a group of gophers crooning contemporary hits in an irritating high-pitch may initially excite a few pre-pubescents but parents be warned — as you search your purse for earplugs, even the little one may disappear out of sheer restlessness and boredom.

Chipmunks screen times

- **DOWNTOWN:** Market Square Wed 12:45-2:45-4:45-6:45-8:45 Thu 12:45-2:45-4:45-6:45; Yonge-Eglinton Centre Wed 11:40-2:10-4:40-7:15-9:45 Thu 11:40-2:10-4:40-7:15; Yonge & Dundas Wed 12:30-1:30-2:15-3-4:10-5-5:50-6:30-7:30-8:20-9-9:50-10:40 Thu 12:30-1:30-2:15-3-4:10-5-5:50-6:30-7:30-8:20-9-9:50.
- **WEST END:** Queensway Wed-Thu 11:35-2:15-4:55-7:25-10; Woodbine Centre Wed 12:35-2:40-4:45-6:50-9 Thu 12:35-2:40-4:45-6:50.
- **EAST END:** Beach Cinemas Wed 12:15-2:30-4:40-6:50-9:15 Thu 12:15-2:30-4:40-6:50.
- **NORTH YORK:** Wed 11:30-2-4:40-7:15-9:55 Thu 11:30-2-4:40-7:15; SilverCity Yorkdale Wed 11:30-1:50-4:30-6:55-9:40 Thu 11:30-1:50-4:30-6:55; Silvercity Fairview Wed 11:45-2:15-4:45-7:50-10:20 Thu 11:45-2:15-4:45-7:50.
- **SCARBOROUGH:** Coliseum Scarborough Wed-Thu 12-12:55-2:30-3:55-5-6:55-7:30-9:30-10; Eglinton Town Centre Wed-Thu 11:35-2:20-4:55-7:25-9:55; 401 & Morningside Wed 11:50-2:15-4:30-6:50-9:15 Thu 11:50-2:15-4:30-6:50.
- **PEEL REGION:** Courtney Park Wed-Thu 10:45-11:30-1:20-2:10-3:55-4:50-6:30-7:25-9-9:55; Orion Gate Grande Wed 11:45-2:15-4:50-7:20-9:40 Thu 11:45-2:15-4:50-7:20; SilverCity Brampton Wed-Thu 11:50-2:10-4:45-7:30-10; SilverCity Mississauga Wed 12-1:30-2:40-4:20-5:15-6:45-7:50-9:20-10:15 Thu 12-1:30-2:40-4:20-5:15-6:45-7:50; Square One Wed 10:45-12:15-1-2:30-3:30-5:15-6:30-7:40-9-10 Thu 10:45-12:15-1-2:30-3:30-5:15-6:30-7:40.
- **NORTH:** Aurora Cinemas Wed 12:10-2:50-5:30-8-10:15 Thu 12:10-2:50-5:30-8; Elgin Mills Wed 1-3:50-7-9:50 Thu 1-3:50; First Markham Place Wed 12-2:30-5:10-7:30-9:50 Thu 12-2:30-5:10-7:30; Interchange 30 Wed 1:30-2-2:30-4-4:30-5-6:30-7-7:30-9-9:30-10 Thu 1:30-2-2:30-4-4:30-5-6:30-7-7:30; Promenade Mall Wed-Thu 12:30-2:40-4:55-7:10-9:15; SilverCity Newmarket Wed 12:10-2:35-4:55-7:45-10:15 Thu 12:10-2:35-4:55-7:45; SilverCity Richmond Hill Wed-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:35-10:10
- **HALTON:** Galaxy Cinemas Milton Wed 11:45-2:15-4:40-7:10-9:40 Thu 11:45-2:15-4:40-7:10; SilverCity Burlington Wed 12-2:30-5-7:30-9:50 Thu 12-2:30-5-7:30; SilverCity Oakville Wed 12-2:30-5-7:40-9:55 Thu 12-2:30-5-7:40.
- **DURHAM:** Ajax Wed 12:30-2:50-5:05-7:30-9:50 Thu 12:30-2:50-7; Pickering Wed 11:45-2:05-4:30-7-9:30 Thu 11:45-2:05-4:30-7; Whitby Wed 10-11:30-12:15-2-2:45-4:30-5:15-7-7:45-9:15-10 Thu 10-11:30-12:15-2-2:45-4:30-5:15-7-7:45.

Times are subject to change.

- *Complete listings are also available at metronews.ca/movies.*

Police give Wood assault warning

Wood

PEOPLE A spokesman for Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood says he has been given a formal warning for assault.

David Rigg said police gave Wood the formal warning or caution yesterday after he was arrested earlier this month for assault near his home in Esher in southern England.

Wood divorced last month. His marriage collapsed after he started dating a young Russian woman. A caution is a formal warning given by police. It is not a criminal conviction but police will keep a record of it for five years. Wood said in a statement that he is "greatly relieved this matter is resolved."

When asked about Wood, Surrey Police said that a 62-year-old man had been cautioned over a domestic incident.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

On real Jersey shore, everyone's a critic

On MTV's reality television show Jersey Shore, the Beachcomber Bar is a place where the clothes are skimpy and punches can fly.

But there's another reality in the resort town Seaside Heights, which is both a setting and a state of mind on the show about eight buff, tanned twenty-somethings and the havoc they create while living together for a month in a posh home.

As the show airs this month and next, the town of some 3,100 year-round residents is hushed. Most of the boardwalk businesses are closed. Only a few fishermen and some beach rehabilitation workers are out. The Ferris wheel and carnival games are shuttered.

And the people who are around this time of year say this just isn't the same place as the one on the show, which was filmed in the summer when the town's population grows tenfold with families at the beach by day and a sometimes wild club scene by night.

Just as one group of Italian-Americans has protested, claiming the show gives them a bad name, many locals think it smears the community.

"You're trying to create a family town, and you got a bunch of kids acting very rude, and it doesn't create a good image," said John LaStalla, a 44-year-old native and municipal worker.

The stars, mostly Italian-Americans with only one from New Jersey, dance, pump iron and party — a lot. They work in a T-shirt shop — a little. And their specialty is drama, whether it involves each other, the people they meet, boyfriends from home or moms. Though unscripted, there are echoes of sitcoms.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Carrie flashes her ice at the rink
Carrie Underwood proudly showed off her engagement ring to a friend while watching her fiancé, Mike Fisher, play hockey in Ottawa Monday night. POPEATER.COM

Co-stars pay tribute to Heath

For the first time, the actors who stepped into the role left vacant by Heath Ledger's death have talked about the passing of The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus lead and why they decided to take part in the film.

Johnny Depp, Jude Law and Colin Farrell signed on to help finish the film, directed by Terry Gilliam, after Ledger's death last January.

"It was an honor to represent Heath," said Deep in a news release. "He was the only player out there breathing heavy down the back of every established actors neck with a thundering and ungovernable talent that came up on you quick, hissing rather mischievously with that cheeky grin.

Ledger died in January 2008 during the filming of Parnassus.

"Though the circumstances of my involvement are extremely heart-rending and unbelievably sad, I feel privileged to have been asked aboard to stand in on behalf of dear Heath."

Law said he has always been a fan of Gilliam's films, and of Ledger. "When I got the call, it was a double tug. I liked Heath very much as a man and admired him as an actor. To help finish his final piece of work was a tribute I felt compelled to make."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Mix of Six

Holiday
The Canadian Tenors present their Christmas celebration at the Rose Theatre at 8 p.m. Info: rosetheatre.ca.

Benefits
Kardinal Christmas Gala for the Breast Cancer Society of Canada takes place at This Is London, 364 Richmond St. W. ticketweb.ca.

Theatre
My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding is being performed at the Panasonic Theatre, 651 Yonge St. mirvish.com.

Comedy
Second City presents Shut Up And Show Us Your Tweets at 51 Mercer St. secondcity.com.

Musical
The Toxic Avenger Musical continues its run at the Music Hall, 147 Danforth Ave. toxicavengertoronto.com.

Dance
Embrujo Flamenco presents weekly flamenco dance. 97 Danforth Ave. embrujoflamenco.com.

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Next Bond will be "gripping"

The next James Bond will have a "shocking" story. Screenwriter Peter Morgan, who wrote the scripts for The Queen and Frost/Nixon, suggested that the third outing of Daniel Craig as Bond would grip audiences. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

Entertainment in brief

OBIT The man who inspired the title character in the Oscar-winning movie Rain Man has died. Kim Peek was 58. His father, Fran, says Peek had a major heart attack Saturday morning and was pronounced dead at a hospital in the Salt Lake City suburb of Murray. Peek was a savant with a remarkable memory and inspired writer Barry Morrow when he wrote Rain Man, the 1988 movie that won four Academy Awards. Fran Peek said his son met Morrow at a convention in the early 1980s and the writer was taken with Peek's knack for retaining everything he heard. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Festive cheer... and more

A cappella choir makes moves to become a mainstream act

Imagine this: By day you're a typical businessman, working the nine to five. Your nights and weekends, however, are spent sharing a stage with nine other guys just like you — performing a cappella songs in small venues while recording an album under Atlantic Records.

That was the double life for the members of Straight No Chaser, an a cappella choir of 10 men who formed in 1996 during their college years at Indiana University.

They say their pursuit in music was experimental at first. Dan Ponce even jokes that they got together because they "wanted to sing to sorority girls."

"It was an interesting balance for that first year," said Ponce, who formed the group, which performs with eight of its original members.

Charlie Mechling, to laughs from the other group members, recalled how he earned a lot of frequent-flier miles jetting between his job and rehearsals.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ATLANTIC RECORDS

A cappella choir Straight No Chaser recently released Christmas Cheers. During their North American tour — in addition to holiday tunes — the group performed songs from the Billboard charts.

"I was leaving Friday night from my life in Vegas, coming to New York, recording, rehearsing and then taking a redeye back," he said. "I felt like a businessman that didn't have any benefits or paycheque."

In college, some of the guys studied music, but not all of them. Others focused on mathematics, journalism or biology, among other subjects.

"We were there connected because we all loved a cappella singing," Ponce said.

The group first caught attention when the CEO of Atlantic Records saw on YouTube its rendition of 12 Days of Christmas, which has been viewed more than 10 million times.

Once signed, the group recorded a Christmas CD, Holiday Spirits, released in September 2008. It followed that with another holiday album, Christmas Cheers, which has a studio version of 12 Days and was released last month.

"Our first album is your more traditional, gather-round-by-the-fire, relaxing, very soothing album," member Seggie Isho said. "Christmas Cheers is where you loosen up your tie, and it's the party album."

But more than just creating CDs good for stuffing Christmas stockings, the singers hope to be played on iPods off-season, too.

"Come Jan. 1, I am done with Christmas music," Mechling joked.

While on a North American tour, which wraps up this month, the group is performing holiday tunes as well as hit songs from the Billboard charts. In August it released Six Pack, a six-song EP with covers from Amy Winehouse's Rehab to Stevie Wonder's Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours. The group also says it's working on a pop album to showcase how it can be more than a "Christmas comedy act." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TO	Vu	SD	C		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
12/23/09 primetime	265	353	2	TVO	On the Trail of Tarka		The Best of The Agenda		New Tricks "Fresh Starts"		Human Edge		Best-Agenda
	211	331	3	GTV	ET Canada	Entertainment	Glee "Preggers" (HDTV)		*Christmas Town* (2008, Romance-Comedy), Garry Chalk				News Final
	215	343	4	OMN1	Two/Half Men	The Office	Omni News: Italian Edition (N)		Vivere V	Omni News:	Law & Order: Criminal Intent		Metropia
	210	302	6	CBC	Wheel Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	*Scrooge* ★★★ (1951, Fantasy) Alastair Sim.				CBC News: The National		The Hour
	214	344	7	CITY	Murdoch Mysteries (HDTV)		Community	Community	Modern Family	Cougar Town	The Jay Leno Show (N)		News
	212	313	8	CTV	Corner Gas	Degrassi: TNG	Rita MacNeil		*Home for the Holidays* (2005, Drama) Sean Young. (DVS)				CTV News
	218	345	11	CHCH	Stingiest Man in Town		Casper-C'mas	*Die Hard With a Vengeance* ★★★ (1995, Action) Bruce Willis, Jeremy Irons.					News at 11 (N)
	-	-	14	-	Family Guy	The Simpsons	Omni News: S. Asian Edition		Omni News: Cantonese Edition		Two/Half Men	King	Miles-Freedom
	213	326	15	SUN	The Insider (N)	George Lopez	*Secret Santa* ★★ (2003, Drama) Jennie Garth.				The Insider	Hitchcock Pres	Becker
	-	387	16	CBS	Inside Edition	Access H.	A Home for the Holidays		Criminal Minds (HDTV)		CSI: NY "Green Piece"		News 4 at 11
	-	385	17	NBC	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Mercy (HDTV)		Mercy (HDTV)		The Jay Leno Show (N)		News
	-	386	18	ABC	Wheel Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Grinch Stole	The Middle	Modern Family	The Middle	Cougar Town	Cougar Town	News
	219	346	20	ACH-B	Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		*Lives of the Saints* (2005, Drama) Sophia Loren.				Stargate Atlantis (DVS)		A News
	-	-	28	FOX	Judge Judy (N)	Two/Half Men	Glee "Preggers" (HDTV)		Glee (HDTV)		Seinfeld	Two/Half Men	The Simpsons
	-	388	61	PBS	PBS NewsHour	Wait for God	A Holly Jolly Pops Holiday		Great Performances (HDTV) Doomed lovers. (N)				Business Rpt.
	297	652	330	WPX	Two/Half Men	Family Guy	One Tree Hill (HDTV)		Gossip Girl (HDTV)		PIX News at Ten Tong.		Two/Half Men
	296	654	331	SBK	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Law & Order: SVU		WBZ News (N)	What's-Store	The Office	Name Is Earl	Frasier
	298	653	332	TLA	The Tyra Show		According-Jim	Family Guy	KTLA News	KTLA News	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	One Tree Hill
news	502	390	26	NW	Connect Today's biggest stories. (N)				CBC News: The National		Princess Diana		National
	500	500	33	CNN	CNN Tonight (N)		Campbell Brown (N)		Larry King Live (N)		Anderson Cooper 360 (HDTV)		
	509	504	79	CNB	Kudlow Report (Live)		As Seen on TV		American Greed		American Greed		Mad Money
sports	405	417	22	net	World Sport	Perfect 10	The Ultimate Fighter				Sportsnet Connected		Hockey Central
	400	400	30	TSN	Hockey IIHF World Junior Pre-Comp: Canada vs. Czech Republic. (Live)					NHL Hockey St. Louis Blues at Calgary Flames.			
	411	457	58	OLN	Ghost Hunters		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman		Ghost Hunters		Bounty Hunter
	417	406	81	SC	Pass Time	Pass Time	Dangerous Drives (HDTV)		Pass Time	Pass Time	Wrecked	Wrecked	Pass Time
family	551	542	25	YTV	The Santa Claus Brothers		A Miser Brothers' Christmas		Fries That?	Mon. Warriors	Family Biz	Prank Patrol	Adrenaline Proj
	554	544	45	TEL	Annabelle's Wish			Wayside	Futurama	King of the Hill	American Dad	Futurama	Robot Chicken
	556	540	51	FAM	Sonny Chance	Suite Life	Overruled!	Han. Montana	Wizards-Place	Latest Buzz	Ned's School	Cory in House	That's-Raven
cable variety	602	567	27	W	*A Wind at My Back Christmas* (2001, Drama), Tyrone Savage				*He Sees You When You're Sleeping* (2002, Suspense)				Confidential
	570	580	29	MM	Make It or Break It		disBAND	Video on Trial	Video on Trial (N)		My Date With...	disBAND	House
	615	520	31	A&E	Dog the Bounty Hunter		Dog the Bounty Hunter		Dog the Bounty Hunter		Steven Seagal	Steven Seagal	Steven Seagal
	700	800	35	TLN	Centrovetrine	Sky TG 24	Caterina e le Sue Figlie				George Lopez	George Lopez	Lopez Tonight
	571	581	36	MMM	Gene Simmons	Gene Simmons	Gene Simmons	Gene Simmons	Gene Simmons	Gene Simmons	Entourage	Wild 'n Out	mmtop10.ca
	575	583	38	CMT	Amer. Funniest Home Videos		*Moonlight and Mistletoe* (2008, Drama), Tom Arnold Premiere.				Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Christmas
	616	521	39	SHO	The Outer Limits		The Guard "The Hold"		Cra$h & Burn		Bones		NCIS
	620	523	40	BVO	Arts & Minds	Bravo!Videos	Johnny Cash Christmas		Wingfield	Star Portraits	White Collar (Part 1 of 2)		Law & Order
	601	562	41	SLC	Rich Bride, Poor Bride		Nearly Dead	Nearly Dead	Newlywed	Newlywed	In Laws	In Laws	ET Canada
	522	506	43	HIS	Ice Pilots NWT (N)		Life After People		Ice Road Truckers		Ice Pilots NWT (HDTV)		Outlaw Bikers
	625	548	44	COM	Air Farce	22 Minutes	Corner Gas	22 Minutes	The Simpsons	South Park	RENO 911! (N)	RENO 911! (N)	Daily Show
	600	564	46	H&G	House Hunters	Property Virgin	Unsellable	Intervention	Property Virgin	Unsellable	House Hunters	House Hunters	Holmes-Homes
	294	529	47	TBS	Family Guy	Family Guy	Law & Order: SVU		The Office	The Office	*The Holiday* (2006, Romance-Comedy)		
	576	582	49	BET	One on One	One on One	One on One	*Inside Man* ★★★	(2006, Suspense) Denzel Washington, Clive Owen.				Mo'Nique
	627	528	50	SPC	Stargate Atlantis (DVS)		Star Trek: Voyager		*Shaun of the Dead* ★★★ (2004, Comedy) Simon Pegg.				*Warriors-Terra*
	581	566	52	MTV	MTV Cribs	Teen Cribs	Jersey Shore		Real World-Road Rules		Real World-Road Rules		MTV Live
	618	524	54	TROP	King	King	The Outer Limits		ET Canada	Whatever	Family Guy	King	King
	603	561	56	FOOD	Jamie at Home Christmas Spe		Italian Escape	Italian Escape	Italian Escape	Italian Escape	Italian Escape	Italian Escape	Jamie Cooks
	261	394	60	V	Murder, She Wrote		Keeping Up	Wait for God	*A Christmas Carol* (2000, Fantasy)			Tabernacle	On, Mountain
	621	527	63	STR	Look-A-Like	TMZ	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		The View (HDTV) (N)		The Dr. Oz Show (HDTV)		TMZ
	553	546	65	TRE	Santa-Town	Guess-Jess	Emily Yeung	Night Garden	Lost in Snow	Fluffy Gardens	Frst Snw-Wint	Yo Gabba	Max & Ruby
	526	507	249	VIVA	Cold Case "Wishing"		Missing "Analysis"		The Closer "Round File"		Cold Case "Wishing"		Mediums
	300	601	301	M1	*Fred Claus* ★★ (2007, Comedy) Vince Vaughn.				*National Treasure: Book of Secrets* ★★ (2007, Action)				Lock 'n Load
	305	612	306	PIX	(7:10) *Top Gun* ★★★ (1986, Adventure) Tom Cruise.				*Hard Target* ★★ (1993, Action)			(10:40) *Gone Dark* ★	
	520	146	-	DISC	Daily Planet (N)		Mighty Ships		Peak to Peak: Gondola		Mayday		Daily Planet
	637	-	-	TVLND	Red Green	Red Green	Fantasy Island		Hart to Hart		Andy Griffith	Phil Silvers	Bizarre
	605	-	-	FASH	America's Next Top Model		FashionTele	RAW	Canada's Next Top Model		Fashion Television-Toronto Fashion Week		

critics' corner

Peak to Peak: Building the World's Biggest Gondola

Acrophobics need not apply. This new special chronicles the construction of the world's longest and highest ski lift between British Columbia's Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. If you think the 4.4-km ride across a windy valley sounds exhilarating, wait until you see what it was like to build it — fighting Father Time and Mother Nature all the way. 9 PM on DIS

Scrooge

Miserly Ebenezer Scrooge gets a long-overdue attitude adjustment when a trio of ghosts visits him on Christmas Eve in this 1951 adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," anchored by Alastair Sim's tour de force performance in the title role. Kathleen Harrison, Mervyn Johns, Michael Hordern and Hermione Baddeley co-star. 8 PM on CBC

In brief

TELEVISION The winner of the CBS reality television show Survivor: Samoa says she took a huge gamble by quitting her job to be on the show. The gamble paid off Sunday for 26-year-old Natalie White of Van Buren, Ark., when it was revealed she won the competition and $1 million prize. White had worked as a saleswoman for Teva Pharmaceuticals USA. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kenya's Style

Kenya Hunt
Exclusively at metronews.ca/globalstyle

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metronews.ca/movies

Ellen and Portia top favourite celeb couples list
Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi have a lot of fans. In a popeater.com poll asking who was the favorite celebrity couple of the year, the talk show host and actress took the top honour. POPEATER.COM

Celebrity Buzz

Murphy's husband 'destroyed'

MORE DETAILS EMERGE Brittany Murphy's death has "destroyed" her husband, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The late Clueless actress' spouse, British screenwriter Simon Monjack, has spoken out about his beloved wife — who died of a cardiac arrest at her Los Angeles home aged just 32 on Sunday — and his devastation at her passing.

He said on Monday that, "My world was destroyed yesterday."

Monjack also revealed life had been normal for the pair until she was found collapsed in the shower surrounded by her own vomit, although Brittany had been suffering from a sore throat recently.

Recalling how her lifeless body was discovered, he explained to Access Hollywood: "Her mother Sharon went into the bathroom because she had been in there a long time. Her mom screamed for me and I ran. Then I called 911.

"She had laryngitis. She had been tired at the end of the year. She had made a couple of movies."

Monjack has also denied rumours Brittany had been mixing with "controlling" people.

He explained: "I don't know why anyone would think that. She found love. We found love. Brittany didn't get to where Brittany was with anyone controlling her — Brittany was Brittany."

In related news, Los Angeles coroner's officials are looking into how details of an investigator's report on Brittany Murphy's death were leaked to TMZ.

Assistant Chief Coroner Ed Winter says he doesn't know how the website apparently obtained the confidential report.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Baldwin dishes on nude scene

GERIATRIC NUDITY: IT'S COMPLICATED Alec Baldwin was fine with going nude for his new film, It's Complicated, even if his co-star, Meryl Streep, didn't have to.

"Well, the director is a woman, and she wants to protect her leading lady," Baldwin tells USA Today. "The men are just toys to her. I was like a little Ken doll — a 51-year-old Ken doll." However, Baldwin did draw the line somewhere: The 30 Rock star reportedly insisted on a "butt double" for his nude scene.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity tweets

Josh Groban doesn't want to procrastinate alone, Lady Gaga is worried about the revellers at her show, Katy Perry drives a stake through the vampire rumours, and Russell Brand is going mad with power.

- @joshgroban Anyone else saving christmas shopping for 4 pm on thurs?
- @ladygaga on a scale of 1 to 10 exactly HOW intoxicated are you in the crowd. PLEASE don't faint in crowd tonight little monsters, it distracts me :)
- @katyperry Read a bunch of yesterdays-news-BULLOCKS. Ppl should know by now that I don't do vampires, but I do, DO @rustyrockets. Don't get it TWISTED!
- @rustyrockets I just read that my tweets are the 3rd most influential in Britain. I will only use this power for good. Now send photos of your sex organs..

METRO WORLD NEWS

Portman grateful to be an only child?

HOW DO YOU KNOW *THEY* WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE TALENTED ONES, NAT? Natalie Portman doesn't believe she would have become an actress if she'd had brothers or sisters. The star is an only child and doesn't believe her parents would have been able to devote so much time to her and take her to all her auditions if she'd had siblings, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

"I had the sole attention of my parents. And you know what? If I had brothers or sisters I would have never become an actress," she said. "My mother has accompanied me to every audition and every acting class. With more children that would have never been possible. They would have been jealous of me."

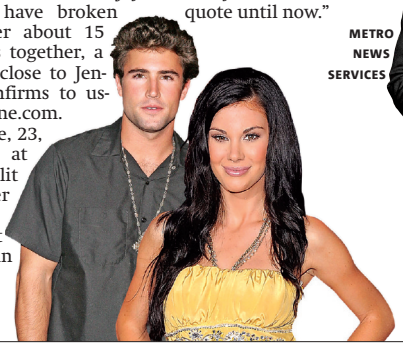
METRO NEWS SERVICES

Splitsville for Hills star Jenner, girlfriend

LADIES, TRY TO CONTAIN YOURSELVES Another couple from The Hills is reality-TV history. Brody Jenner and Playboy model Jayde Nicole have broken up after about 15 months together, a source close to Jenner confirms to us-magazine.com.

Nicole, 23, hinted at the split on her Twitter account earlier in the month with a wistful entry: "'Sometimes when you truly love someone you have to let them go.....' I never really understood that quote until now."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Is Tiger looking to mend image on SNL?

MEANWHILE, HE'S ON A BOAT Tiger Woods may be viewing a surprise appearance on Saturday Night Live as the best way to mend his image, according to MSNBC. "He's a little incredulous at the way he's being judged," a source says. "He thinks his golf game should be all people care about. If he went on SNL it would definitely change the conversation."

Meanwhile, his yacht, Privacy, has set sail, possibly with Woods on it. "Tiger's boat Privacy has been docked at Old Port Cove in North Palm Beach for more than a week," a source tells People magazine. "On Saturday morning, after stocking up on provisions from Costco, the boat left town."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Rimes stays mum on divorce details

BUT IT'S *LIGHTS* OUT ON THEIR MARRIAGE LeAnn Rimes and estranged husband Dean Sheremet have agreed to a private divorce, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The singer-and-actress and the former backing dancer's seven-year marriage will legally end on June 19, 2010, but the pair have requested that details of their split remain confidential.

A document filed at a Los Angeles court read: "The settlement shall not be filed in this proceeding due to the parties mutual desire to maintain their respective rights to privacy."

The settlement will divide their cash, property and other valuables the couple shared during their marriage. In September, LeAnn — who is now romancing her Northern Lights co-star Eddie Cibrian — announced she was getting a divorce

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Today Partly cloudy -4° / -8°
Thursday Partly cloudy 0° / -2°
Friday Rain and snow 100% 4° / -2°

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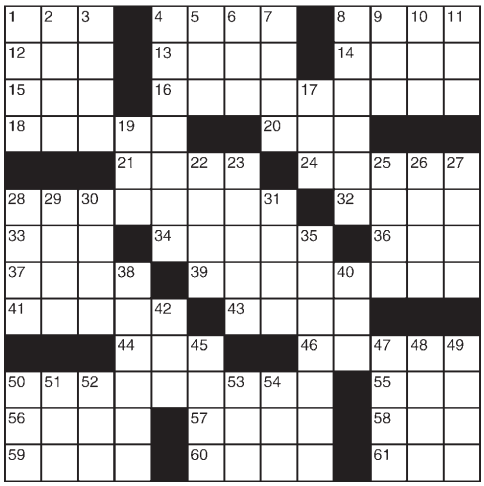

ACROSS

ACROSS
1 Massachusetts cape
4 Eager
8 React in horror
12 Lawyers' org.
13 Baseball team
14 Church section
15 Part of H.R.H., at times
16 "The Clue in the Crossword Cipher" solver
18 Asian leader who inspired a jacket style
20 Small barrel
21 "Oh, woe!"
24 Antitoxin
28 Tapped
32 Ripped
33 Tatter
34 Binge
36 Past
37 Bit for Fermi
39 Patron of Scotland
41 Foundation
43 Not pizzicato
44 Slight application
46 Friars Club honor
50 "The Price Is Right" host
55 Scrooge's cry
56 Tittle
57 Unmacho type
58 Work with
59 Vacillate
60 Lummox
61 "Honor — father ..."

DOWN

1 Songwriter Sammy
2 Theater trophy
3 Morse's T
4 Ring
5 By way of
6 Hostel
7 Ship's floor
8 Thingie
9 Springtime abbr.
10 Away from NNW
11 Church perch
17 "Absolutely"
19 Uncooked
22 iPhone downloads
23 In a way, slangily
25 Bellow
26 Incite
27 Cat call
28 Hardly colorful
29 — -tat-tat
30 Hollywood clashers
31 Approach
35 Put into code
38 Carnival area
40 Scooby- —
42 Pouch
45 Cry loudly
47 Touch
48 Obi or cummerbund
49 Yon folks
50 Insult
51 Tier
52 Greek vowel
53 "Flying Down to —"
54 Ostrich's cousin

Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	4							2
		9	1					
2		8		7	4			5
					3		8	1
		4		1		7		
6	3		8					
9			7	5		8		3
					6	9		
8							5	

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

4	5	3	7	6	2	1	9	8
2	9	6	1	4	8	7	5	3
7	8	1	5	3	9	6	4	2
6	2	8	3	9	5	4	7	1
3	4	5	8	7	1	2	6	9
1	7	9	6	2	4	3	8	5
8	3	4	2	5	7	9	1	6
9	1	2	4	8	6	5	3	7
5	6	7	9	1	3	8	2	4

On the web

For more games and 60 additional daily cartoon strips, visit metronews.ca

Metro Recipe of the Day

Pan-fried Chicken with Mushrooms and Blueberries

INGREDIENTS:

1 tbsp (15 ml) all-purpose flour
4 skinless chicken breast fillets
2 tbsp (25 ml) olive oil
3 strips bacon, chopped
1/2 lb (250 g) chestnut mushrooms, sliced
1 tbsp (15 ml) Dijon mustard
7 oz (200 g) blueberries
Juice of 1/2 lemon
3 tbsp (45 ml) finely chopped fresh parsley

METHOD:

1. Put flour into shallow dish and season well, then spread out. Add chicken breasts and turn to coat. Shake off excess.
2. Heat oil in frying pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, reduce heat to medium and cook until well browned underneath. Turn over to brown other side. Pierce middle of one breast with point of knife to check that meat is no longer pink.
3. Transfer chicken to serving dish. Add bacon to pan and cook, stirring, until cooked and fat runs out. Add mushrooms and continue to cook over fairly high heat, stirring, 2 minutes.
4. Add mustard to pan and stir with mushrooms and bacon. Gently stir in blueberries. Add lemon juice, stir and immediately remove pan from heat.
5. Sprinkle in parsley, then spoon mushrooms and blueberries over chicken and serve.

SERVES 4

rd.ca

For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

sallybrompton.com For Sally's expanded daily and weekend horoscopes, visit metronews.ca

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
You may have bitten off a bit more than you can chew but there is no need to panic because in a matter of days you will get your second wind.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
You may be tempted to put off finishing something that has begun to take up a lot of time but considering the effort, that would be a waste.

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
It is of the utmost importance that you keep your thoughts positive, even though a number of negative things appear to be happening in your life.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
A relationship that has been through a tough time of late will get easier for both of you when love planet Venus moves into your opposite sign.

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
The problem you are grappling with has a simple solution but you seem unable to see it because you have convinced yourself that there isn't one.

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Cut back on your commitments. Do fewer things for other people. That might sound selfish but you have been giving too much of yourself.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
What other people want is irrelevant. It would appear that someone has been playing on your feelings to further their own position.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
Something that has caused you a great deal of mental and emotional anguish will resolve itself to your satisfaction today.

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
You may not want to admit defeat but it seems you have no choice in the matter. Push your ego to one side and don't think it reflects badly on you.

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
If you focus your mind too intently in one particular direction today you may miss out on something even more important, and enjoyable.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
Cosmic activity in the most sensitive area of your chart is making you feel vulnerable at the moment but there is no need to fear the worst.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Someone will say something less than friendly to you or about you today and you won't be too happy about it.

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This day in history

1954: The first human kidney transplant is performed by Dr. Joseph E. Murray at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts.
1970: The North Tower of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, New York City is topped out at 1,368 feet (417 m), making it the tallest building in the world.
1972: The 16 survivors of the Andes flight disaster are rescued after 73 days, having survived by cannibalism.
1986: Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, lands at Edwards Air Force Base in California becoming the first aircraft to fly non-stop around the world.

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49cc, 2-stroke

~~$299~~ **$29.99*** JAZZ MINI Dirt Bike*
49cc, 2-stroke

~~$199~~ **$49.99*** JAZZ 49cc ATV*
49cc, 2-stroke

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EBIKE IN A BOX
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- Standard Bluetooth® hands-free cell phone capability*

★★★★★ Crash Test Rating NHTSA - Frontal impacts††

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SX MODEL SHOWN

2010 FORTE KOUP

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PLUS Receive a prepaid gift card

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- Standard 4-wheel disc brakes and ABS
- Standard Bluetooth® hands-free cell phone capability*

HWY: 5.8 L/100KM 49 MPG CITY: 8.3 L/100KM 34 MPG

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- Bluetooth® hands-free cell phone capability*
- 6-way adjustable driver's seat

HWY: 5.8 L/100KM 49 MPG CITY: 7.1 L/100KM 40 MPG

EX MODEL SHOWN

2010 SOUL

WELL-EQUIPPED FROM $15,795* OR LEASE FOR $199* PER MO. 48 MOS. AT 3.9% LEASE APR* $1,880 DOWN PAYMENT

PLUS Receive a prepaid gift card

- 4 cylinder 1.6L, 16-valve CVVT, or available 2.0L, 16-valve CVVT engine
- Standard 6 airbags, with active front headrests
- Bluetooth® hands-free cell phone capability*
- Power windows, locks and doors

★★★★★ Crash Test Rating NHTSA - Frontal impacts††

HWY: 6.3 L/100KM 45 MPG CITY: 7.7 L/100KM 37 MPG

4u BURNER MODEL SHOWN

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*MSRP for 2010 Forte Koup 2.0L LX MT (FO521A)/2010 Soul 1.6L MT (SO550A) is $18,495/$15,795. Delivery and destination fees of $1,455/$1,650 excluded. *Cash purchase price for 2010 Forte 2.0L LX MT (FO540A) is $14,745 and includes a cash rebate of $950 based on an MSRP of $15,695. Delivery and destination fees of $1,455 excluded. **Bi-weekly finance payment for 2010 Rio EX MT (RO542A) is $72 with an APR of 3.9% for 60 months, amortized over an 84-month period. Estimated remaining principal balance of $3,610 plus applicable taxes due at end of 60-month period. Delivery and destination fees of $1,455 excluded. ◆Monthly lease payment for 2010 Forte Koup 2.0L EX MT (FO521A)/2010 Soul 1.6L MT (SO550A) is $199/$199 for 60/48 months at 3.9%/3.9% lease APR with a $2,940/$1,880 down payment. Total lease obligation is $14,909/$11,455 with the option to purchase at end of term for $5,663/$5,882. Delivery and destination fees of $1,455/$1,650 excluded. License, registration, insurance, dealer administration fees and taxes are excluded. Lease has 20,000 km/year allowance (other packages available) and 0.10¢/km for excess. Other lease and finance options also available. Dealers are free to set individual prices. Prices subject to change without notice. Certain restrictions may apply. ❖Zero Payments until Spring® (90 day payment deferral) applies to purchase financing offers on all new 2009 and 2010 Kia models. No interest will accrue during the first 60 days of the finance contract. After this period, interest starts to accrue and the purchaser will repay principal and interest monthly over the term of the contract. ✧Receive a prepaid Visa card worth up to $1,000 to keep extra cash handy this holiday season. The prepaid Visa card values of $300, $500 and $1,000 are on cash purchase, lease or loan, or applied as a credit towards the listed cash purchase price at time of purchase. $300 cards are available on 2010 Forte sedan, 2010 Forte Koup, 2010 Rio/Rio5 and 2010 Soul. $500 cards are available on all 2009 vehicles, 2010 Rondo, 2010 Magentis and 2010 Sportage. $1,000 cards are available on 2010 Borrego and 2010 Sedona. §Kia's Integrity Advantage is underwritten by Echelon General Insurance Company and is valid on any new Kia model financed or leased through an authorized Kia dealer, for up to one year after purchase, and covers negative equity up to $7,500. Please refer to your Kia Integrity Advantage insurance policy document for full terms and conditions. Only available at participating dealers. Restrictions apply. Coverage options vary by province. See your participating Kia dealer for details. The Echelon General Insurance Company logo is a Registered Trademark of Echelon General Insurance Company. >Highway/city fuel consumption for 2010 Forte LX MT is 5.8 L (49 MPG)/8.3 L (34 MPG); 2010 Rio EX MT is 5.8 L (49 MPG)/7.1 L (40 MPG); 2010 Soul 1.6L MT is 6.3 L (45 MPG)/7.7 L (37 MPG) per 100km. The actual fuel consumption of these vehicles may vary. These estimates are based on the Government of Canada's approved criteria and testing methods. Refer to the Government of Canada publication EnerGuide Fuel Consumption Guide. ††NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) test results. Visit www.safercar.gov for full details. ▼Kia's "Worry-Free Comprehensive" warranty covers most vehicle components against defects occurring under normal use and maintenance conditions. ★Bluetooth® technology enabled cell phone required. The Bluetooth® word mark and logo are registered trademarks and are owned by Bluetooth SIG, Inc. Price, availability and specifications are subject to changes without notice. Some vehicles advertised may include optional accessories or after-sale equipment and may not be exactly as shown. Information in this advertisement is believed to be accurate at the time of print. Offer ends January 4, 2010 and is valid for residents of Ontario and Manitoba only. KIA is a trademark of Kia Motors Corporation.